The Mauryan Age is a seminal period in the political and socio-cultural life of the people of India. It was characterised by the rise of imperial power to an unprecedented level, the blossoming of culture and arts, the growth of economy and brisk contacts with lands and peoples beyond its geographical frontiers. It is to this age that the term 'Classical' is appropriately applicable, and with sufficient good reason, in so far as it has served India as an exemplar of political integration and moral regeneration. A study of the Age presents the students of History a variety of problems which are as complex as they are important. With a view to understanding the dynamics of its vitality, this monograph seeks to examine as to how the intellectual and cultural movements of the Age were mutually interconnected as also with the development of a specific imperial structure.

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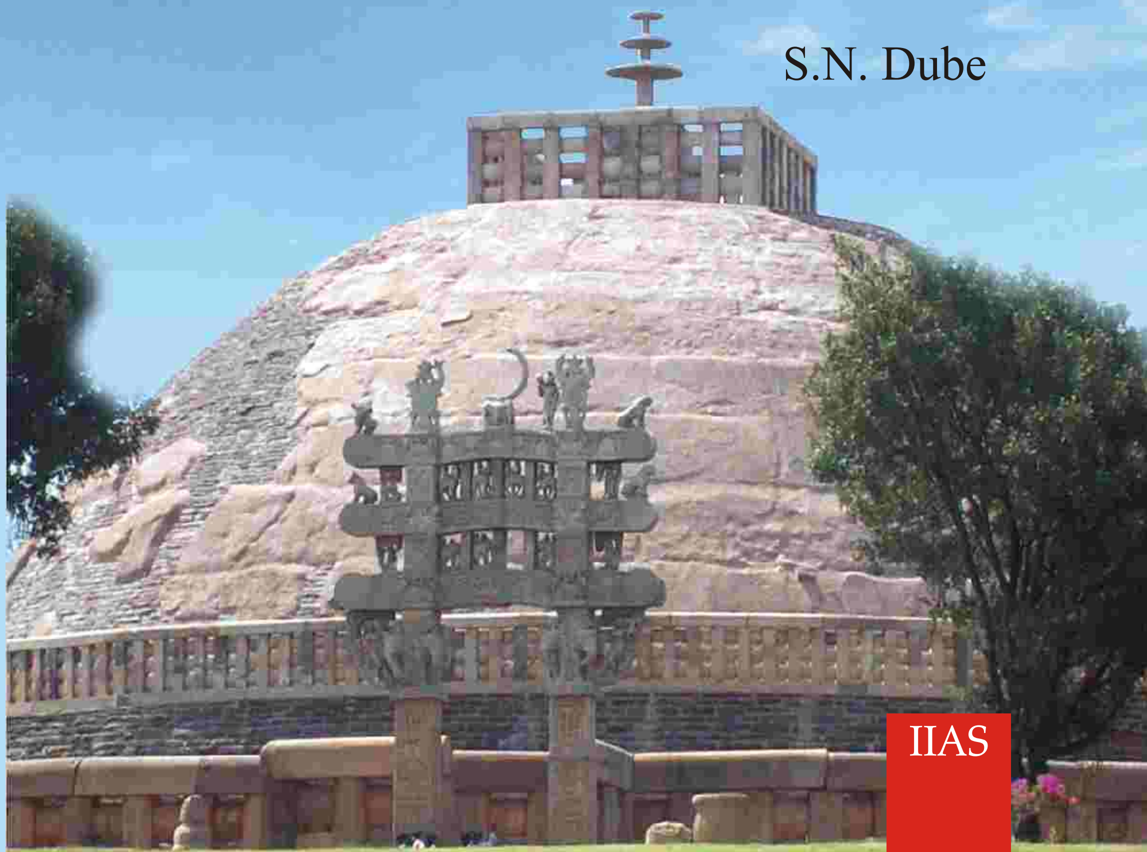
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IIAS

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With Special Reference to Pāli and Ardhamāgadhī Sources

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Contents

Dedicated to the sacred memory of
my beloved mother

Smt. Shyama Dube

and

to that of my revered father

Shri Uma Shanker Dube B.A., LL.B
(S.P.P., U.P. Police Lucknow)

Abbreviations

BB	Bibliotheca Buddhica
BI	Bibliotheca Indica
BST	Buddhist Sanskrit Text Series
CHI	Cambridge History of India
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum
DPPN	Dictionary of the Pali Proper Names
EI	Epigraphia Indica
EMB	Early Monastic Buddhism
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IA	Indian Antiquary
JA	Journal Asiatique
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society
JBORS	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society
JBRS	Journal of Bihar Research Society
JPTS	Journal of Pali Text Society
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland
PE	Pillar Edict
PHAI	Political History of Ancient India
PTS	Pali Text Society
RE	Rock Edict
SBB	Sacred Books of the Buddhists
SBE	Sacred Books of the East
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandichen Gesellschaft

PREFACE

The age of the Mauryas is a seminal period of Indian history characterised by changes of far-reaching significance in the political as well as socio-cultural life of the people of India. It witnessed the rise of imperial power to an unprecedented level, enabling the unification of India under the auspices of a single common authority. The unified state, the first in India's history, incorporated a greater part of Bhāratavarṣa as also some adjacent regions. The political unification under the Mauryas makes the chronology of Indian history precise. Political unity leads to historical unity. A uniform and efficient system of administration under Chandragupta and his successors brought in its train the cultural unity of the country. A study of the age presents the students of history a variety of problems, which are as complex for a satisfactory explanation as they are important. Numerous questions, interesting in themselves and more interesting by reason of their general significance, unfold before us as the age progresses. With a view to understanding the vitality and continuity of Indian tradition, as well as its ability to adapt to alien ideas, harmonise contradictions and mould new thought patterns, it is interesting to examine as to how the intellectual and cultural movements of the age were mutually inter-connected as also with the development of a specific imperial structure. The present study is a modest attempt to proceed in that direction. Generally known facts of the Mauryan history have been put in a perspective to give an idea of India's historical evolution.

The study consits of ten chapters. The first chapter, entitled *Introduction*, underlines the importance of Mauryan

age in terms of political unity leading to historical and cultural unity and all important question of chronology being made precise. The second chapter, entitled *Study of the Sources*, surveys relevant sources, highlighting those which are of our direct concern, i.e., *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* texts. The third chapter, entitled *Intellectual and Social Background*, traces the backdrop of spiritual unrest and intellectual ferment opening the vista of heterodox ascetic movements, the foremost being Buddhism and Jainism. Each one of them was based on a distinctive set of doctrines and distinctive rules of monastic and social conduct. Their genesis and nature, as well as the extent of their spread and expansion in the society have also been delineated. *Imperial Unification and Wider Horizons*, which forms the fourth chapter, discusses in detail as to how the Mauryan age ushers in a unique period of unification and consolidation. The accomplishments of the great soldier and founder of the empire Chandragupta, in the aftermath of the disruptive invasion of Alexander the Great in 326 BC, placed India on the political map of the world. The conscientious administrative system of the Mauryas owes as much to him as to his renowned chancellor Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya. An important consequence of Alexander's campaigns in India was that India and Greek world were brought closer to each other than before and the way was opened up for active contact between them, leading to the growth of trade and cultural intercourse. The fifth chapter, entitled *Benign Autocracy and Its Legacies*, discusses the forty years of Aśoka's reign which forms a great epoch not only in the history of India, but in the anals of mankind. The baffling problem of Aśoka's religious conviction has been analysed in detail and hitherto unutilised sources have been highlighted on the issue. Asoka's Buddhist missions are claimed to have operated in West Asia, Egypt and Macedonia and the rise of Essenes sect, to which Jesus belonged, may, probably, owe something to the Buddhist influence.

Rise and Ramifications of Early Buddhist Sects, which is the caption of the sixth chapter, traces the background, evolution and ramifications of the early Buddhist sects which seem to have proliferated in the age of Aśoka. The seventh chapter, entitled *Critical Transition in Buddhist Ideas*, presents a broad cross-section of Buddhist thought in the age of the Mauryas when some of the conflicts and obscurities latent in the earlier doctrines emerged openly and when in the course of their discussion ground was prepared for future development. The *Pāli* text *Kathāvatthu*, a leading document of the age of Aśoka, is a kind of *magnum opus* for a reconstruction of early Buddhism and for understanding the figurative transition from the earlier historical forms to the later developed systems. *Consolidation of other Ascetic Orders*, forming the eighth chapter, underlines the development and importance of Jainism in the history of Indian thought. The growth of the Jaina monastic order till the Mauryan times, as gleaned from Jaina texts and inscriptions shows the powerful support it received from its dedicated followers, both monks and lay disciples. It also enjoyed royal patronage in considerable measure. There is reason to believe that Jainism, like Buddhism, began to flourish in the days of the Mauryas. The concluding part of the chapter is devoted to piecing together the evidences with a view to projecting another contemporary movement led by the famous ascetic Makkhali Gośāla. The *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* sources are in agreement in describing the Ājīvikas as naked ascetics, professing rules of life quite distinct from the hermits of the Vānaprastha order. The Buddhists and the Jainas mercilessly criticise the fatalistic creed of the Ājīvikas. The ninth chapter, entitled *Theistic Movements*, seeks to examine the rise of the theistic orders ascribable to this period. It seems that the genesis of the theistic movements, especially Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, was, perhaps, connected with the intellectual discontent of the 6th-5th centuries B.C. and it might be reflecting the other shade of the deep-seated agitation. The

thought-ferment manifested itself in the north-east of India in an anti-Vedic movement, while in the north-west attempt was made to reconcile the newer tendencies with orthodoxy. The tenth chapter is in the form of concluding remarks followed by a General Bibliography.

I am deeply indebted to the Governing Body of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla for the award of a fellowship to enable me to undertake this study. Professor G.C. Pande has always been the prime source of inspiration for me in all my academic endeavours, and without his encouragement it would have been difficult for me to complete this project. I am grateful for the support received from ex-Directors of the Institute Professor V.C. Srivastava and Professor Bhuvan Chandel in whose tenure the project was pursued. I must also acknowledge my deep sense of gratitude to the present Director Professor Peter Ronald deSouza for bearing with me the inordinately delayed publication of this monograph. To my valued friend and former colleague, Shri R.S. Mishra, I am grateful for his kind interest in the progress of this work. I do not have adequate words to express what I owe to my *sahadharmiṇī* Smt. Geeta. The officers and staff of the Institute had always been very cooperative and helpful during my three years stay at the Institute for which I am highly thankful to them.

S.N. DUBE

I

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Mauryan empire marks a unique event in the history of India. The empire was created and founded by Chandragupta,[1] who, according to the accounts of Plutarch and Justin, appeared before Alexander in the Punjab (326–25 BC) as a 'stripling'. A man of humble birth though, he was endowed by tradition with signs of an august destiny. Northern India was passing through a state of ferment about that time. The Nanda dynasty of Magadha was tottering under the burden of its avarice, extortion and unpopularity. In the north-west the people, divided, as they were, smarted under the blows of Alexander's invasion. The political situation was, thus, ripe for a radical change. It did not take long for a bold initiative to be taken by Chandragupta, who aided by Chāṇakya, conceived the grand design of reversing the conditions. Both Indian and classical sources agree that Chandragupta overthrew the last of the Nandas and occupied the throne of Magadha.[2] The classical sources add that, soon after the retreat of Alexander, Chandragupta liberated the north-west by driving out the Greek garrisons. He made himself the master of the whole of the Āryāvarta. The results of the formidable stature that he gained were seen a few years later, when Seleucus I, the king of Syria, tried to repeat unsuccessfully Alexander's exploits in India.[3] The consolidation and expansion of the empire of Magadha at the hands of the Mauryas dominates the scene for more than a century, realising a long cherished dream of universal monarchy (*sāmrājya*).

With the establishment of the Mauryan rule we come from darkness to light and it is from this period that the history of India finds a proper chronological setting, entering into a unique period of expansion and consolidation of Indian statehood. Alexander the Great, Chandragupta, Chāṇakya (Kauṭilya) and Aśoka are the dominating figures who play a pivotal role in shaping the contours of its history. Some enviable developments, which characterise the period, mark a distinct break from the past and a turning point in Indian history. The age was preceded by momentous events, such as the upsurge of non-Brahmanical or so-called heterodox schools of thought, the rise of second urban revolution, introduction of coinage and the art of writing, the ascension of Magadhan aggrandisement, etc. The interplay of these factors generated a tumult in Indian society and led to developments which gave a fillip to fundamental changes in India's history and culture. Fortunately, in a study of the Mauryan period, there is a comparative abundance of information from sources, either contemporary or later.

It is also true that of all the early periods of Indian history the age of the Mauryas has evoked extreme curiosity and interest of researchers and authors. From the beginning of the Indological studies to recent times different aspects of its history and culture have continued to attract scholars. Even a select list of publications on the Mauryas, pertaining to the last sixty years, would be quite voluminous and would show that, on an average, more than one book has come out every two years. A perusal of the studies, however, demonstrates that their focus generally has been on the sources, especially epigraphic, and the Mauryan political history and polity. Added to that, while writing about ancient India, historians have largely relied on the works of Brahmanical literature and have generally ignored the Buddhist and Jaina texts or at least have not utilised them to their full potential. An attitude of apathy towards Buddhism

and Buddhist culture, as a secondary factor, characterises early writings on Indology both Indian and Western. What seems to remain a desideratum, to some extent, is an analysis of the Buddhist and Jaina texts which have bearings on the period in so far as they contain data poorly elucidated in the inscriptions. Numerous scholarly studies on the sources of Mauryan history notwithstanding, some of the Buddhist and Jaina works which do not seem to have been fully utilised or cross-checked are—*Kathāvatthu, Milindapañha, Dīpavaṁsa* and *Mahāvaṁsa* (supposedly based on earlier texts), Sinhali *Aṭṭhakathā* and *Uttaravihāra Aṭṭhakatha*), *Mahāvaṁsatīkā* (*Vaṁsatthappakāsinī*), *Mahābodhivaṁsa, Tiloyapaṇṇati,* Bhadrabāhu's *Nijjuti* on *Bṛhatakalpasūtra, Āvassayachuṇṇi, Sukhabodhā* (*Prākrit* commentary on *Uttarājjhayanasutta), chuṇṇis* and commentaries on *Dasavaikālika sutta* and *Niśithasutta, Āvassayachuṇṇi* (as reflected in *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*), etc.

The administrative system of the Mauryan empire, which may be said to be at the base of subsequent administrative development of India, may owe something to the predecessors of the Mauryas, but one gets the strong impression that much of it was due to the creative ability of Chandragupta himself and his famous chancellor Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya. If there was not much scope for the exercise of civic liberties and rights, it has to be noted that conditions elsewhere were no better and that the despotic authority of his government was used largely for promoting the welfare of the people, as is clear from the testimony of both Kauṭilya and Megasthenes. As the architect of the Mauryan empire and, to a large extent, of the Mauryan administration Chandragupta certainly leaves an indelible mark on Indian history. The remarkable accomplishments of Chandragupta have been immortalised by a grateful posterity. There are lauds, tales, plays, even philosophical dissertations in Indian literature in which authors eulogise the great hero in whose

arms the earth, harassed by barbarians, found a shelter and who nearly succeeded in bringing about the unification of 'Jambudvīpa'. Fragments of the cycle of legends with him as the hero survive even in the works of classical writers.

The significance of the Mauryan rule lay not merely in the conquest of its rulers, but in the fact that it was able to weld the largely diverse elements of the sub-continent into a well-knit empire by successfully reducing the tremendous cultural gaps between the farflung regions. It, thus, gave expression to an imperial vision which was to dominate succeeding centuries of Indian political and cultural life. It also witnessed, among other things, the extension of humanistic and cultural activities of India much beyond her own physical boundaries, and the remarkable experiment in promoting international peace and harmony through abandonment of the policies of violence and military aggrandisement. The quiet tone in which the Mauryan emperor Aśoka, one of the most interesting personalities in the history of India, records the despatch of his missions to preach the *dhamma* in alien lands and provide for the medical treatment of men and animals speaks eloquently of a practising *dhārmika dharmarājā*. He was tireless in his exertion and unflagging in his zeal, all directed to the welfare of not only his own subjects, whom he considered as his children, but the entire world of living beings. Aśoka is undoubtedly the brightest luminary in the firmament of Indian history. By the dint of his high idealism, his noble ideal of his duties and responsibilities as emperor, his unflinching determination for the service of the people and the unsurpassable humanity of his nature, Aśoka towers far above the other great rulers of history.[4] Under him India reached the high water-mark of material progress and, in a sense, of moral progress too. His eminence lay in the practical and detailed application to the daily administration of a vast empire of the highest priniciples of a religion and morality.

Aśoka was equipped both by his endeavour and by circumstances to understand the requirements of his time. He coupled with this characteristic an extraordinary degree of idealism, and the courage with which he attempted to expound and impose *dhamma*, particularly in the complex milieu of the third century BC, is remarkable. The large numbers of Aśokan inscriptions located in various parts of his empire give us an idea not only of the personality of the emperor but also of the important events of his reign. Perhaps, the most momentous of these was his conversion to Buddhism, which took place after the victorious campaign of Kaliṅga.

In the hisotry of Buddhism, Aśoka holds a place of importance, perhaps, second only to that of the founder himself. From an Indian sect he made it a world religion. He did it by emphasising the elements of universality that it had always contained. He realised and acted on the truth that true religion is personal and spiritual, not a matter of ceremonial or of ritual, but of conviction and conduct. The world has considerably gained by the missionary activities of Aśoka. Large part of the South-East Asia has assimilated Indian ideas, especially Buddhism. The whole of the Far-East is in India's debt, for it is Buddhism which has played a crucial role in shaping the distinctive civilisations of China, Korea, Japan and Tibet. As regards the West the heterodox Jewish sects of the Therapeutae and Essenes, which probably influenced early Christianity, followed monastic practices in some respects similar to those of Buddhism.[5] Parallels may also be traced betweeen a few passages in the New Testament and the *Pāli* scriptures. Art also received unprecedented impetus during the momentous reign of Aśoka. The architecture up to his time was mostly wooden, and it was he who made the use of stone common. The imperial palace at Pāṭaliputra, the metropolis of the Mauryas, has been decribed by Greek writers as excelling in splendour the

Achemenid palaces at Susa and Ecbatana. The most striking monuments of Mauryan art are the Aśokan pillars (*dhamma-staṁbhas*), with sculptured capitals of which both shaft and capital strike the observer by their size and finish. *Pāli* or 'Aśokan *Prākrit*' in which dialect his inscriptions are couched became almost the *lingua franca* of India. We also get interesting glimpses of society as constituted in Aśoka's time. It comprised religious orders like Brāhmaṇas, *Śramaṇas*, and other *pāsaṇḍas*, among which the Ājīvikas and the Nigaṇṭhas (Jainas) were the most prominent.[6] Besides, there were the householders (*gṛhasthas*) and, curiously, the inscriptions mention all the four divisions, viz., Brāhmaṇas; soldiers and their chiefs (*bhaṭamāya*), corresponding to Kshatriyas; *Ibhyas* or Vaiśyas; and slaves and servants (*dāsabhaṭaka*), i.e. Śūdras.[7] The people were wont to perform many ceremonies to bring them good luck and they had faith in the hereafter (*paraloka* or *svarga*).[8] The rigidity and exclusiveness of the caste system at the time of the foundation of the Mauryan empire as noted by Megasthenes is likely to have dissipated considerably owing to the religious propagation of Aśoka in favour of Buddhism which depricated caste prejudices, based on birth, and tended to strengthen the forces making for social elasticity.

The age of the Mauryas, indeed, marks a distinctive landmark in the history and culture of India, in so far as the momentous developments which characterise it facilitated fundamental changes in the society and culture that had taken root in all parts of the area one could reasonably henceforth designate as 'India' a distinctive land and people with enviable achievements and products. The origin of certain institutions which were to shape Indian culture is frequently traceable to this period. In the subsequent times the personality of India acquired new contours and delineations which were both the result of an imperial system and the foreshadowing of other patterns. The course of the

evolving civilisation demonstrates, at the same time, strong bias towards an elaboration of certain basic elements of civilisation, an elaboration of some earlier roots. The period was characterised by the blossoming of culture and arts, the growth of economy and brisk contacts with lands and peoples beyond its geographical frontiers. It was in this important historical period that some of the basic features of Indian social system and major institutions of ancient Indian society and state acquired their form. A number of new religious and philosophical trends also developed, including Jainism and Buddhism, the latter undergoing great deal of transformation, both internally and externally. It was, thus, an age marked by the efflorescence of a fine balance between both the religious and secular aspects of life.[9] It is to this age to which the word 'classical' is appropriately applicable, and with good reason, in so far as it has served India as an exemplar of political integration and moral regeneration.

The foundation of the first Indian empire was, in fact, only one of the two momentous events of this period. The other was the rise of the *Śramaṇa* sects of which Jainism and Buddhism were the leading light. Their appearance was preceded by the presence of a diversity of religious and philosophical beliefs about the nature and destiny of man in the universe. Probably, there may be hardly any major religious or philosophical view prevalent today or which has evolved in the course of human thought in the East or West that was not reflected then by one or the other thinker. These new religious movements, thus, sprang from a considerable intellectual ferment which had begun earlier. The intellectual liveliness of the age seems to get reflected in the eclectic religious interests of the Mauryan rulers, since there is evidence to show that Chandragupta became a follower of Jainism towards the later days of his life and his son and successor Bindusara was a supporter of the Ājīvikas.

Aśoka's contribution to Buddhism is well-known. Some of his successors also were ardent supporters of unorthodox sects. Tibetan author Tāranātha alludes to a variety of religious inclinations of the scions of the Mauryas. Thus, the historical period, roughly corresponding to the second half of the first millennium BC, was characterised by momentous events and developments, e.g. the rise of non-Brahmanical or heterodox ascetic schools of thought, the second urban revolution, the emergence of a very influential mercantile community organised in guilds, the introduction of art of writing[10] and coinage[11], the ascendance of the Magadhan empire, the influx of a series of foreigners of different races and nationalities and so on. Establishment of close contacts with western Asia, since the time of the Achaemenians, must have provided yet another avenue for the flow of unorthodox ideas. It is, evidently, a period of expanding material culture, with far wider trade relations than in the previous period and much greater amenities of life for the wealthy, although a town proletariat has arisen simultaneously which is, perhaps, much poorer than their humbler predecessors of the earlier times. In the Vedic texts cities are hardly referred to. Now, in the time of the Buddha and Mahāvīra, populous towns and cities exist in all parts of the Gangetic valley. The Ganges, which was easily navigable, stimulated mercantile traffic by water and this, probably, caused the shifting of the Magadhan capital from Rājagṛha to Pāṭaliputra. *Pāli* texts furnish clear evidence of the growing importance of shipping in this period.[12] The growth of cities and commerce and the organisation of trade and craft into guilds make the social landscape of this age quite distinct from that of the preceding period. The interplay of factors, such as the above, generated a tumult in the life and thought of the Indian people as is evidenced by the great religious and ascetic upsurge and intense social, political and economic unheaval.

NOTES

1. It was Sir William Jones, the charismatic father of Oriental studies and pioneer of Indo-Aryan linguistics, who in a flash of inspiration rescued the name of Sandrokottos (Sandracottus in Latin) by identifying him with Chandragupta Maurya. 'I cannot help mentioning a discovery which accident threw my way,' he had told the members of the Bengal Asiatic Society in his 1793 annual address; cf. *Asiatic Researches*, IV. p. 11.
2. Cf. *Infra,* pp. 87ff.
3. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, p.133.
4. H.G.Wells, *A Short History of the World*, p. 115.
5. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. V, p. 401, XI, p. 318-9.
6. Cf. Pillar Edict VII.
7. Cf. Rock Edict V.
8. Cf. Rock Edicts IX, XIII, Pillar Edicts, III, IV, VII etc.
9. Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 1; Cultural Past, pp. 483 ff; 'Asoka and the Gupta Age' in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A.L. Basham, pp. 37-38.
10. The *Pāli Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Jātakas* take writing for granted. (For *Pāli* texts refer to the Nālandā edition except, wherever, specified otherwise).
11. There are references to *kahāpaṇa* in the *Pāli Nikāya, Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Jātakas.* The last two works also mention *māṣaka* and *kākaṇika. Nikkha* is mentioned in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, III, p. 289, but may be referring to a weight of gold as elsewhere in the *Pāli* texts.
12. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya* (P.T.S.) I. p. 222, II p. 89; *Therīgāthā* (P.T.S.) 530; *Dīpavaṁsa* IX. 10-28; *Mahāvaṁsa*, VI.

II

STUDY OF THE SOURCES

For a study of the Mauryan age, there is comparative abundance of information from sources, either contemporary or later, which makes it potentially the best documented period in the entire history of pre-Muslim India. These sources range from Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* to a series of Aśoka's edicts inscribed on pillars, rocks and wall-facings. The latter constitute our first major source whose authenticity cannot be doubted. Megasthenes, Kauṭilya and the Aśokan inscriptions, when correctly interpreted, in fact, supplement one another to a remarkable extent. The Buddhist and Jaina sources which throw significant light on the socio-cultural life and movements in the sixth-fifth centuries BC continue the broad trends into the Mauryan period.[1] The variety of sources, available for the period, are of two types, viz., literary and archaeological. The literary sources include (1) the Buddhist, Jaina and Brāhmaṇical texts written in *Pāli*, *Ardhamāgadhī*, Sanskrit etc., (2) secular works like the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, the *Mudrārākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta and (3) the classical accounts of Megasthenes and others and the itineraries of such Chinese pilgrims as Fa-hian, Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsang) and I-tsing, giving eye-witness accounts or mentioning legends gathered from informants. Among the archaeological sources are included (1) the inscriptions of Aśoka and Daśaratha, (2) monuments and (3) coins and other antiquities. Various sources of the Mauryan period have been discussed individually, as well as, collectively by eminent

scholars. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to a brief survey of the sources and highlight only those which are either of our direct concern or have come to light recently.

The historical material which can be extracted from the mass of Buddhist and Jaina religious literature is mainly in the form of similes, stories, statements, observations etc., and the very incidental nature of this material increases its value as a source of history. The early Buddhist and early Jaina literature belongs to the early historical period of India's past and many events figuring in their texts are identifiable clearly with actual facts of the political and cultural history. The accounts furnished by the Buddhist and Jaina sources for the sixth to fourth centuries BC, for example, are extremely valuable for the simple reason that epigraphic evidence has not yet come up. They are no less significant for the Mauryan period proper, as they provide some useful fresh data on socio-religious life of the period. While narrating the life-story of the Buddha and his chief disciples, or elucidating Buddha's teachings on *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, principal rules (*paññatti*), the amended rules (*anupaññatti*) etc., the Buddhist authors not only mention the occasion and the individuals involved but also throw significant light on the contemporary conditions and life of the people. Thus, the vast and rich materials available in *Pāli* render invaluable aid to the sudy of ancient India, especially for the second half of the first millennium BC. Apart from the canonical literature, *Pāli* commentaries and sub-commentaries also furnish us with valuable information regarding the religious, social, political, economic and architectural history. The Buddhist sources show a healthy respect for chronology and usually disdain the mathematical symmetries and astronomical exaggerations found in the Vedic and Jaina texts. The early Jaina texts, which describe the life and teachings of Mahāvīra, also furnish some valuable data and it is pertinent to note that the Buddhist account is often

supported by the Jaina sources, there being good deal of agreement between them as regards the historical data. In the works of both these religious movements, great attention has been paid to the states and principalities of north-east India which were the centre of activity of the Buddha and Mahavira. It was only natural for these authors to take due notice of the monarch, ruling chiefs and other people, such as, merchants, bankers, important lay disciples etc., who patronised and supported the new religions. The Buddhist and Jaina texts have much to say, thus, about the dynasty they call 'Maurya.' The texts are also very particular about the geographical settings of the sayings, speeches and sojourns of the teachers and their key disciples. We find numerous references to various capitals, cities, towns, market places, ports and villages which they visited. It may be observed, however, that both *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* texts contain historical, as well as, legendary material. There is, therefore, need for scientific treatment of the information gleaned from these sources.

The Buddhist literature may broadly be divided, on the basis of language, into three categories, viz., *Pāli,* Mixed Sanskrit and Pure Sanskrit. There is another way of classifying the Buddhist literature, i.e. (a) the *Pāli* texts of the southern tradition and (b) Sanskrit texts of the northern tradition. The Buddhist canonical *Pāli* literature is comprised of the *Tripiṭaka* which are collections of speeches and conversations of the Buddha, songs of monks and nuns and the rules of the Buddhist *saṅgha.* A remark made earlier by H. Kern has been endorsed by G.C. Pande that there is the possibility of the recitation of the '*Dhamma*' (*Sutta*) and '*Vinaya*' immediately after the death of the Buddha by his disciples in the first Buddhist council.[2] The practice of reciting the *Vinaya* and *Sutta Piṭakas* was repeated in the second and the third Buddhist councils. That is why the Sri Lankan tradition says that the canon, which was compiled in the third

Buddhist council convened by Aśoka under Moggaliputta Tissa, was taken to Sri Lanka by Mahinda (Mahendra) and was later recorded in writing, in its present form, in the reign of the first powerful Sinhalese king Vaṭṭagāmaṇi in the first century BC.[3] The more reliable evidence of Aśoka's own edicts, and the votive inscriptions on the *stūpas* of Sāñchī and Bharhut would show that certain canonical texts which are available in the *Pāli* canon and which bear general resemblance to it were already in existence in 3rd century BC at least. Some important sources may be illustrated to show how they have helped the present study.

The *Aṅguttara Nikāya,* as noted above, furnishes us the list of '*Soḷasa Mahājanapadas,*' wherein Kāśī and Kośala are shown as independent states. The *Mahāvagga* informs us that they were not only independent of each other but the former was stronger and more prosperous of the two. It was only later that Kāśī became a part of the kingdom of Kośala. Likewise, Magadha, which annexed the eastern kingdom of Aṅga in the time of Bimbisāra, enabling him to assume the title of Aṅgarāja, used to be a tax-payer to Aṅga earlier. The Buddha is depicted as a great admirer of republics. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* he advises monks to observe the same habits as practised by the Licchavis.[4] According to the *Jātakas,* the leading members of the Licchavi republic were called '*rājā*', and their number amounted to 7707.[5] *Raṭṭha,* the *Pāli* form of the Sanskrit term *rāṣṭra* denotes a 'kingdom' or 'empire' and, as at one place the order of mention goes to suggest, it was the highest unit in the political division, the others being, *gāma, nagar, nigama* and *janapada.*[6] *Raṭṭha* or *rāṣṭra,* however, denoted a state and had not acquired the modern notion of a nation state.[7] In the *Vibhaṅga* of the *Pārājika* there is a passage giving the definition of kings,[8] which shows that for practical purposes all the executive heads were known as *rājā,* in the sense that they were all state functionaries. The king used to constitute a cabinet of

ministers. The *mahāmāttas* could be promoted or demoted depending on the success or failure of their advice.[9] The *Vinaya Piṭaka* notices a number of state officials designated as '*mahāmāttas*,' each having the name of the respective department prefixed with them to distinguish from others, such as *senānāyaka-mahāmātta* (army officer), *vohārika-mahāmātta* (judicial officer) *gaṇaka-mahāmātta*, *upacāraka-mahāmātta* (officer of the royal household) and so on. The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, especially the *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga* contain a mine of information and provide a rare glimpse into the social and cultural life of India during sixth, fifth and fourth centuries BC.[10] Beside narrating the deeds of the Buddha, since his enlightenment, these texts describe in detail the development of the *saṅgha* and its relations with the society.

There are some significant references in the Buddhist texts which have a direct bearing on the political and cultural development of the Mauryan period. Attention, for example, may be drawn to the *Cakkavattīsīhanāda Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, where the ideal of the *cakravartin* (universal ruler) is elaborated. It is, probably, this ideal which Aśoka tries to put into practice to become '*dhamma-cakkavatti*' (universal moral ruler) by resorting to the principle of '*dhamma-vijaya*.' The *Dīgha Nikāya* also mentions the Kshatriya class known as the Moriyas of Pippalivana.[11] The *Mahāvaṁsa* adds that Chandragupta was born of a family of Kshatriyas called Moriyas.[12] The *Mahābodhivaṁsa* adds that 'Prince (*kumāra*) Chandragupta, born of a dynasty of kings (*narinda-kula-saṁbhava*), hailing from the city known as Moriyanagar, which was built by the Śākyaputtas, being supported by the Brāhmaṇa (*dvija*) Chāṇakya, became king at Pāṭaliputra.'[13] It is interesting to note that the Jaina tradition also maintains that Chandragupta was born of a daughter of the chief of a village community who were known as 'rearers of royal peacock' (*mayūra-poṣaka-gāme*).[14] Like the *Pāli Aśoka Sutta*

(Aśokan cycle) of the southern tradition, which later turned into Sanskrit *Aśokāvadāna* of the northern tradition, there was an early cycle of tales about Chandragupta also, Chāṇakya-Chandragupta *kathā* of which the most ancient version survives in the *Pāli* chronicles of Sri Lanka and their commentaries. They describe the last days of the Nanda rule and the struggle launched by Chandragupta and Chāṇakya. Another, but quite similar version of this *kathā* is preserved in the Jaina text *Pariśiṣṭaparvan.*[15]

Some *Pāli* canonical texts and passages find a mention in the Aśokan edicts. He also lays down in the edicts regulations about schism in the *saṅgha* and inter-sectarian debates. These debates are recorded in detail in the *Kathāvatthu*, a text belonging to the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* of the *Pāli* canon and traditionally placed in the reign of Aśoka. The *Jātakas*, which form the tenth book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Pāli Sutta Piṭaka*, contain the birth stories of the Buddha in previous existence as Bodhisattvas. The *Jātakas* as prose narratives, with the verses included in them, are unparalleled in the folk literature of the world in respect of their humour, wit, information, human interest and scope. They throw a flood of light on the social, economical, political, cultural and religious life of the people of ancient India, during the second half of the first millennium BC.[16] Apart from the *Jātakas*, some other texts of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* valuable for this period are *Vimānavatthu*, *Itivuttaka. Petavatthu*, *Udāna*, *Sutta-nipāta*, *Theragāthā*, *Therīgāthā*, *Khuddaka Pāṭha* and *Dhammapada*.

The history of the Mauryas is reflected in considerable detail in the *Pāli* tradition of Sri Lanka of which the most important were *Siṅhala-Aṭṭhakathā* and *Uttaravihāra-Aṭṭhakathā*, now lost, but usually regarded as the basic source for the Sri Lankan *Pāli* chronicles *Dīpavaṁsa* (c. 4th cen. AD) and *Mahāvaṁsa* (composed by Mahānāma in c. 5th-6th cen. AD).[17] These and the commentary on the latter called

Mahāvaṁsa-ṭīkā or *Vaṁsatthappakāsinī* (8th-9th cen. AD) provide useful material on the Mauryan dynasty. The *Mahābodhivaṁsa,* composed by Upatissa in 9th-10th cen. AD and *Mahāvaṁsa* of Mogallāna, also called extended or Cambodian *Mahāvaṁsa* (10th-11th cen. AD), though late in date, provide more elaborate details. The authors of the Sri Lankan chronicles, while narrating the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, take particular interest in the reign of Aśoka, which led to the introduction of Buddhism in the island. The *Dīpavaṁsa* account has been found to be of much help in the reconstruction of Mauryan chronology.[18] However, it should be borne in mind that the Sri Lankan chronicles were compiled over a long period of time by several Buddhist monks, who sometimes distorted the text or introduced their own corrections. Among non-canonical *Pāli* texts *Milindapañho* is also important for the early Mauryan history.

Mauryan emperor Aśoka, being the greatest patron of Buddhism, the chroniclers of its history had, since long, been drawn to his personality. *Aśokāvadāna,* a cycle of legends about him enjoyed popularity in India, Nepal, Tibet etc. Among the Sanskrit works of the northern Buddhist tradition found in the form of *Avadānas,* the most important is the *Divyāvadāna* found from Nepal. Composed in c. 3rd cen. AD by an unknown author, it is an important source for the history of the Mauryas. Chapters 26 to 29 of the *Divyāvadāna* form the significant text *Aśokāvadāna.* It is believed that the 'Aśokan Cycle' was based on ancient chronicles which had begun to be composed during his own lifetime in Magadha itself, describing his pilgrimage to the Buddhist sacred places and his relations with the *saṅgha.*[19] It is likely that in the middle of the second century BC the 'Aśokan Cycle' in *Pāli* (*Aśoka Sutta*) reached Kauśāmbī and from there it travelled to Mathurā where it was rendered in Sanskrit to be known as *Aśokāvadāna.* Whereas the *Pāli* text brought to Sri Lanka became the source of a number of legends of the southern

'Aśokan Cycle' the *Aśokāvadāna* made its way from Mathurā to north-west India in the first century AD and started 'Aśokan Cycle' of the northern tradition. The depiction of some of the legends in the sculptural remains of Sāñchī show clearly that these legends were widespread as early as the second century BC.[20] The *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, another Sanskrit work, also throws useful light, though from the Buddhist point of view, on the Mauryan age.[21] The *History of Buddhism* by Tāranātha, a late medieval work (1608 AD)[22] based on some early sources like the *Avadānas* of Aśoka and Kuṇāla and some Hīnayāna works also provide important information. The travelogues of Fa-hian, Yuan Chwang and I-tsing narrate legends about Aśoka, which they heard in the course of their journey in India. Fa-hian, for example, who visited India in the fourth century AD, mentions about a pillar at Saṅkisā with a lion capital, and an inscribed pillar near Pāṭaliputra, neither of which have been recovered so far. Similarly, the 7th century Chinese traveller, Yuan Chwang, refers in his memoirs to the existence of Aśokan pillars at Rājagṛha, Śrāvastī and other places, of which some were of architectural importance and others carried the king's edict.[23] Once again, these have not been found so far. Looking to the nature of the edicts, meant primarily to spread the message and directive of Aśoka in the different parts of his empire, it is possible that apart from stone, the edicts were also written on some perishable material like wood and similar other objects.[24]

The Jainas have used for their canon the language known as *Ardhamāgadhī*. According to the Śvetāmbara tradition, the Jainas lost their original texts or they fell into disorder in later days, and it was left to Devardhigaṇi, the president of the Jaina council of Valabhī, held in AD 453, to have redacted the canon. Relying on the dating suggested by H. Jacobi, the Jaina *Sūtras* may be taken to reflect conditions prevailing during the centuries preceding the Christian era. Later on,

according to regions and the spirit of the age, the Jaina authors adopted various languages for their compositions, including Sanskrit. The Jaina sources are neither mean nor meagre. They are, in fact, as extensive as the Buddhist sources, if not more. However, as compared to the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical sources the Jaina sources have been utilised to a small extent. They provide useful record of dynastic chronologies of India for one thousand years or so after the death of Mahāvīra. These records have been preserved in works, like *Tiloyapaṇṇati, Harivaṁśa Purāṇa, Āvaśyakavṛtti, Titthogali-paiṇṇa* and *Mahāpurāṇa* and a number of later works, like *Trilokasāra, Pariśiṣṭaparvan, Tīrthoddhāra-prakaraṇa, Prabandhacintāmaṇi* etc.[25]

The Jaina sources in *Ardhamāgadhī* and Sanskrit, having a bearing on the age of the Mauryas, present two streams of tradition relating to Chandragupta Maurya and Chāṇakya. Of these traditions, one relates to the commentaries on the *Uttarājjhayana* and the *Āvassaya* respectively, the first and the second *mūlasutta* of the Śvetāmbara canon and the other to the Jaina *kathā* literature. However, they are both supposed to be rooted in the *Nijjuttis* or concise metrical expositions of the canonical texts. It is surmised that the Chandragupta tradition, as a written record, first occurs in the *Chuṇṇi* (*Chūrṇi*) on the *Āvassaya Nijjutti* which formed the basis for Haribhadra Sūri of the Vidyādhara *gaccha* to write the elaborate story of Chandragupta and Chāṇakya somewhere between 740 and 770 AD, available in his *Āvaśyaka-sūtra Vṛtti*, a Sanskrit commentary on the *Āvassaya.* About three centuries later, Devendragaṇin wrote the story afresh in *Prākrit* in his commentary on the *Uttarājjhayana.* Devendragaṇin ignored the story of Chandragupta and Chāṇakya as given in the *Āvaśyakasūtra Vṛtti* and based his narrative mainly on the *Āvassaya Chuṇṇi.* Yet another version of the story in metrical Sanskrit is found in the *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* (*Sthavirāvalicharita*) written by Hemachandra Sūri in c.1165

AD, as an appendix to his *Triṣaṣṭiśalākā-puruṣacharita*. It is based mainly on the *Āvassaya* narrative of Haribhadra.[26] The above Jaina tradition has some interesting information to offer about Chandragupta Maurya. For example, the *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* relates the story that while the deposed Nanda king was allowed by Chāṇakya to leave Pāṭaliputra with all the luggage that could be loaded in a single chariot, he had with him his two wives and one daughter who got infatuated towards Chandragupta at the first sight and was allowed by her father Nanda to marry him.[27] The above Jaina tradition is also unanimous in maintaining that in the later days of his reign, Chandragupta was converted to Jainism, and that Magadha faced a severe famine lasting twelve years whereupon he abdicated in favour of his son Siṁhasena (probably Bindusāra) and retired to Śravaṇa Belgolā in present Karnataka with the saint (*śruta-kevalin*) Bhadrabāhu, where he starved himself to death in accordance with the Jaina tradition.[28] This tradition about his conversion to Jainism and his migration to the south has been recorded with some variations in a number of documents, both literary and inscriptional.

The second stream of the Chandragupta–Chāṇakya story is found in the Jaina *kathā*-literature, such as, *Bṛhatkathākośa* of Hariṣeṇa, the *Ārādhanāsatkathāprabandha* of Prabhachandra, the *Ārādhanākathākośa* of Hariṣena and the *Kathākośa* of Śrichandra. The earliest *Kathākośa* is that of Hariṣeṇa (931 AD) and the latest that of Nemidatta (1530 AD), while the other two belong to the intervening period. It is interesting to note that whereas the *Kathākośas* of Hariṣena and Nemidatta are composed in metrical Sanskrit, Śrichandra's *Kathākośa* is in metrical *Pāli* and that of Prabhachandra in Sanskrit prose. It is generally thought that these authors have derived the story from an earlier *Ārādhanā* text of the Jainas, viz. the *Bhagavatī-Ārādhanā* of Śivārya, assigned to the first century AD. But the *Bhagavatī-Ārādhanā*

itself seems to have its genesis in earlier traditions and the basic kernel of the Chāṇakya-Chandragupta *kathā* is found embedded in the literary stratum of the *Paiṇṇas* (miscellany), which are included in the canon of the Śvetāmbaras and in the *Aṅgabāhya* literature of the Digambaras. Out of a total of ten *Paiṇṇas,* the two, which are taken to reflect the original form, are *Bhattapaiṇṇa* and the *Saṁthāra,* and it is in them that the original story of Chāṇakya as a Jaina monk has been found to occur, wherein he is depicted as observing certain religious practices as prescribed by Mahāvīra. The date of the *Paiṇṇas* is believed to be not later than 100 BC and it is, probably, this tradition which is the source of the Jaina version of the history of Chandragupta Maurya.[29]

Among the Brāhmaṇical texts, *Purāṇas* are the principal source for the study of the Mauryas. These works refer to Chāṇakya and the Mauryas, giving details of their dynastic list and the duration of the reign of individual rulers. They also provide information on social relations and political organisation. As a result of frequent transcriptions and interpolations, however, the chronological scheme of rulers has sometimes become confused.[30] The *Sūtra* and *Śāstra* literature (c. 800–400 BC) of ancient India also throws valuable light on the religion, philosophy, science, political and social ideas and institutions of the second half of the first millennium BC. The other Brāhmaṇical sources include the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, the *Mudrārākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta and partly works like the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva and *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* of Kshemendra. The discovery of the text of *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya was indeed an epoch making event in the study of Indology. Ever since the appearance of this text in the Mysore-Sanskrit series in 1909 and its translation in 1915, scholars both in India and abroad evinced keen interest in the study of its various aspects. It is a very important source for the history of the Mauryas. Despite all the dispute centring around its authorship and date, which is considered

by some scholars to be as late as AD 300, its primary kernel is still believed to belong to the Mauryan period.[31] It throws a flood of light on the changed political and socio-economic order. The drama *Mudrārākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta is based on the theme of the overthrow of the Nanda rule by a combined effort of Chāṇakya and Chandragupta. Another stream of the Brāhmaṇical tradition about Chāṇakya and Chandragupta is found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva and is believed to be based on the cycle of legends given in the *Bṛhatkathā*. The Chandragupta-Chāṇakya *kathā* continued to be elaborated in the later Brāhmaṇical texts, such as, the commentaries written on the *Mudrārākṣasa* by Dhuṇḍhirāja (*Mudrārākṣasa Vyākhyā*), Mahadeva (*Mudrārākṣasakathā*), Ravi Nartaka (*Chāṇakyakathā*) and Anantakavi (*Rākṣasapūrvakathā*) and on the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* by Ratnagarbha. In the process new legends were added to the original story. The *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa also gives some useful, though at times confused, account of the Mauryas. For example, at one place it says that Aśoka built a temple of Śiva named Aśokeśvara and at another Aśoka is said to have embraced the doctrine of Jina.

The classical accounts are considered as the most important literary sources for the early history of the Mauryas, for the reason that, firstly, they are earliest in time, and nearest to the time of Chandragupta and secondly, they are based on contemporary Indian reports, stories and traditions gathered by the Greek authors at the first hand. Although several of the companions of Alexander wrote of their travels, and other contemporaries and near-contemporaries compiled lives of Alexander and geographies based on his campaigns, none of these survives. Unfortunately, another eye-witness account for the age of the Mauryas, the original text of *Indica*, authored by Megasthenes, has also not come to light so far. Megasthenes, the ambassador of Selecus Nicator to the court of Chandragupta, visited and remained

at Paṭaliputra for sometime and wrote a detailed account of his observations. The lost accounts of Alexander's historians and Megasthenes still current in Roman times were used by authors, such as, Diodorus, Strabo, Curtius, Pliny, Plutarch, Arrian, Justin, Ptolemy, Aelian and Clemens Alexandrinus, belonging to the period from the first century BC to second century AD in compiling their own works. Though these works do survive, but they do not always agree, for the reason that scraps of information gleaned from other later sources are included indiscriminately and when describing India, they often dwell on fantastic hearsay. To the gold-digging ants of Herodotus were now added strange figures of gargoyle men with elephant ears in which they wrapped themselves at night, with one foot big enough to serve as an umbrella, or with one eye, with no mouth and so on. It is interesting to note that the classical authors themselves accuse each other of falsehood and exaggeration. Their value is also diminished by the fact that we have clear evidence of the texts being tampered with in later times. Allowing for less obvious distortions, these accounts still provide vital clues to the rise, after Alexander's retreat, of a new powerful dynasty in north India. The evidence based on the accounts of Megasthenes shows that the Seleucid ambassador gathered from local informants details of customs, traditions and culture of the host country. The surviving fragments of his work evince his familiarity with some of the religious and philosophical trends and ideas of the time. As noted above, along with authentic facts the *Indica* also contained many fictitious and sometimes altogether fantastic stories. Obviously, Megasthenes accepted uncritically some of the informations which he gathered from his sources. However, a comparison of the account of Megasthenes with the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the inscriptions of Aśoka would show that Megasthenes often provides a correct description of several administrative and social institutions of the Mauryan period, as also, spiritual

and philosophical ideas which were current in the society.[32]

The importance of epigraphy in the study of the Mauryas can hardly be over-emphasised. It ranks foremost among the archaeological sources of the period. It has been estimated by epigraphists like D.C. Sircar that something like 80 percent of our knowledge of the history of India, before about AD 1000, is derived from inscriptions. This is particularly true about the reign of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka in whose case we have, apart from literary, monumental and numismatic sources, a large number of edicts of the king himself, written on rocks, pillars, slabs and cave-walls. These edicts have been found from different parts of India, as also, from present day Pakistan and Afganistan. These are the earliest Indian epigraphs, which can be dated with certainty. The edicts of Aśoka are dated in his regnal year, ranging from the eighth (Rock Edict XIII) to the twenty-seventh (Pillar Edict VII). The regnal dates can be corelated to absolute years, and in accordance with the chronology followed in the present study, the dates would be c. 267–248 BC, derived from various external sources. The Aśokan inscriptions are written in various dialects collectively referred to as 'Aśokan *Prākrit*.' With the exception of north-western Rock Edicts, and those in non-Indian languages, i.e., Greek and Aramaic, all other Aśokan edicts are written in the earliest attested form of the *Brāhmī* script. Only the Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā Rock Edicts are in *Kharoṣṭhī*.

On the basis of the material used, the inscriptions of Aśoka can be classified into two main groups, Rock Edicts and Pillar Edicts. The former group is further subdivided into Major Rock Edicts (including the Separate Rock Edicts), Minor Rock Edicts, and Cave Inscriptions; the latter into Major Pillar Edicts and Minor Pillar Edicts. The Minor Rock Edicts are believed to have been the first to be issued followed by the Major Rock Edicts, and the Pillar Edicts were, probably, the last to be promulgated.[33] The Major Rock Edicts consist of a

set of fourteen proclamations inscribed on rocks at the following places: (i) Shāhbāzgarhī (Peshawar, Pakistan), (ii) Mānsehrā (Hazara, Pakistan), (iii) Kālsī (Dehradun, U.P.), (iv) Girnār (Junagarh, Gujarat), (v) Bombay-Sopārā (Thana, Maharashtra) and (vi) Erragudi (Karnool, A.P). In the Rock Edicts, Aśoka sets forth the principles of *dharma (dhamma)* which he wishes to inculcate on his officials and on the people over whom they were set to rule, and the steps he took to secure the observance of these principles within his empire and to propagate them in foreign lands. These edicts throw interesting light on his ideas and actions on such matters as (a) the protection of animal life by decreasing the number of creatures killed in the royal kitchen, (b) the provisions of public welfare, such as, medical clinics, planting of herbs and trees etc. (c) the propagation of *dhamma* (d) respect for rival sects and so on. The Rock Edict XIII unravels the transformation of Aśoka when he expresses his deep sense of anguish over the enormous loss of life and other sufferings inflicted on people, as a result of his conquest of Kaliṅga. Two further sets of Rock Edicts from that particular region viz., (vii) Jaugaḍa (Ganjam, Orissa) and (viii) Dhaulī (Puri, Orissa) contain edicts I to X and XIV, but in place of XI-XIII have two Separate Rock Edicts highlighting Aśoka's exhortations to the royal officers (*mahāmāttas*) at Sāmapā and Tosalī, respectively, to honour and enforce his wishes. These edicts contain the rules made by Aśoka for the pacification of the territory annexed after the sanguinary war. In the recent time some of his new edicts have come to light. A recently discovered (1989) stone slab containing fragments of the so-called Kaliṅga Edicts XII and XIV and of Separate Rock Edicts I and II has been found from a place outside the Kaliṅga region, viz., (ix) Sannati (Gulbarga, Karnataka). In the absence of any such record at Erragudi or any other place of Andhra-Karnataka, it has been suggested that the area of Karnool and now Sannati were

territories annexed by Aśoka and brought within his empire and, thus, the stationing of a viceroy and the issue of a set of (Major) Rock Edicts, including Separate Kalinga Edicts was deemed to be necessary.

The Minor Rock Edicts are now known from seventeen places: (i) New Delhi (also referred to as Amar Colony or Bahapur, (ii) Bairāṭ (Jaipur, Rajasthan) (iii) Gujarrā (Datia, M.P.), (iv) Sahasrām (Rohatas, Bihar) (v) Ahraurā (Mirzapur, U.P.), (vi) Rūpnāth (Jabalpur, M.P.) (vii) Panguraria̅ (Sehore, M.P.), (viii) Māskī (Raichur, Karnataka) (ix) Govimaṭh (Raichur, Karnataka) (x) Pālakiguṇḍu (Raichur, Karnataka) (xi) Niṭṭur (Bellari, Karnataka) (xii) Udegolam (Bellary, Karnataka), (xiii) Rājula Maṇḍagiri (Karnool, A.P.) (xiv) Erraguḍi (Karnool, A.P.) (xv) Brahmagiri (Chitradurga, Karnataka), (xvi) Siddapura (Chitradurga, Karnataka), (xvii) Jatiṅga-Rameśvara (Chitradurga, Karnataka). The Minor Rock Edicts recovered from the first ten of the above sites contain the text of Minor Rock Edict I only, which focusses on Aśoka's increased religious enthusiasm and exhorts his subjects to follow the example. The remaining specimens contain also the Minor Rock Edict II, recommending respectful behaviour towards parents, elders, teachers, etc. Some of the above-mentioned Minor Rock Edicts have come to light recently, such as, Ahraurā (1961), New Delhi (1966), Panguraria̅ (1976), and Niṭṭur and Udegolam (1977). Another rock edict, available only in one copy was found near the Buddhist remains of Bairāṭ and is now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.[35] In this edict Aśoka makes a candid declaration of his acceptance of Buddhism, his faith in the Buddha, *Dhamma* and the *Saṅgha.* It is addressed to the *saṅgha* and recommends seven Buddhist texts for their study. The three Cave Inscriptions, found in the Barābar hills of Gayā in Bihar, record the gift of the caves to the Ājīvikas by Piyadasi Aśoka. Two of them were inscribed in Aśoka's 13th regnal year and

one in the 20th regnal year.

As regards the Pillar Edicts of Aśoka, these comprise a basic set of six edicts engraved on Aśokan sandstone plillars and have been recovered from six different palces (i) Delhi-Toprā (ii) Delhi Meerut, (iii) Lauriā-Ararāj (East Champaran, Bihar), (iv) Lauriā Nandangarh (West Champaran, Bihar), (v) Rāmapurvā (West Champaran, Bihar), (vi) Allahabad-Kosam. These so-called Major Pillar Edicts are believed to have been inscribed in the 25th -26th year after Aśoka's coronation.[36] The Pillar Edicts were installed in important cities and along roads within the empire. Three of the pillars are located on the road from Pāṭaliputra to the Buddhist holy places at the foot of the Himālayas. Whereas all other pillars have a set of six edicts, it is only the Delhi-Toprā Pillar which has, in addition, a seventh text. The additional text on the Delhi-Toprā column mostly summarises and restates the contents of other Pillar Edicts, and to an extent, those of the Major Rock Edicts also. On the whole, the Pillar Edicts are mainly concerned with the elucidation and promulgation of *dhamma*, the inculcation of which is supposed to result into control of sin and passion, regulation of feasts and animal slaughter and spread of morality and justice. The Pillar Edicts underline Aśoka's concern for his subjects' well-being. The Allahabad-Kosam (Kauśāmbī, U.P.) Pillar contains, in addition, to six basic edicts two brief additional inscriptions. The first of these is known as the "Queen's Edict" since it refers to the gift of the king's second queen' (*dutiye deviye*). The second one is the so-called 'Schism Edict', addressed to the *mahāmāttas* of Kauśāmbī, which prescribes the punishment to be given to a monk or nun who causes schism in the *saṅgha.* Two other Minor Pillar Edicts, (i) Sāñchī (M.P.), engraved on a broken pillar at the sourthern entrance of the Great *Stūpa*, and a nearly complete version engraved on the (ii) Sārnāth Pillar, contain similar but more extensive texts on

the banishment of schismatic monks or nuns. The Sāñchī Minor Pillar Edict adds a note on the king's desire that the *saṅgha* may remain whole and united and may endure forever. Two other Minor Pillar Edicts at (iii) Nigalī Sāgar and (iv) Rummindeī are both located in Bhairwā (Nepal). The Nigalī Sāgar Minor Pillar Inscription, installed near a large tank, commemorates Aśoka's visit and expansion of the *stūpa* of the Buddha Konākamana, who is counted among the former Buddhas. Of particular interest is the inscribed pillar which was installed by Aśoka to commemorate his visit to the birth-place of the Buddha. It was discovered in 1896 at Rummindeī in the Nepalese Tarai. The modern name of the place still continues to represent the 'Lumbini' grove of the ancient tradition of Buddha's birth. A fragment of yet another Pillar Inscription, ascribed to Aśoka has been discovered recently at the *stūpa* of (v) Amarāvatī (Guntur, A.P.).[37]

Beside the aforesaid inscriptions of Aśoka, there are some other[38] *Brāhmī* inscriptions, which may be attributed to the Mauryan period. There are, for example, three Nāgārjunī Hill Cave Inscriptions of Daśaratha, the grandson of Aśoka which like the Aśoka's Barābar Cave Inscriptions, record the donation to Ājīvika monks of caves for residence during the rainy season. The Mahāsthān stone plaque (Bogra, Bengal) and the Sohgaurā (Gorakhpur, U.P.) bronze plaque inscriptions are also assigned to the Mauryan period on palaeographic grounds. Both these records contain instruction for the storage of surplus grain and other products as a precaution against famine. Taking into account the Jaina sources which refer to a severe famine in the time of Chandragupta the Mahāsthān and Sohgaurā inscriptions may be taken to be of the early Mauryan period. The inscriptions of Aśoka, being contemporary documents are, undoubtedly, the most trustworthy sources for the history of the Mauryas. The edicts provide a considerable amount of

fresh data on the political and cultural history of the period and elucidate a number of controversial questions. They throw a flood of light on the career, religious policy and administration of Aśoka and give us a comprehensive idea of his *dhamma.* They present a remarkably sharp picture of the man who issued them and the empire he ruled. The edicts, however, are not without limitations. For example, these are completely indifferent, not only to the early life and early career of Aśoka, but also to his father Bindusāra and illustrious grandfather Chandragupta.

Other archaeological sources for the Mauryan period consist mainly of coins, pottery and monuments. The earliest coins of India, known as 'Punch Marked Coins' of which a large number of silver and a much smaller number of copper specimens have been found, are supposed to have been issued in pre-Mauryan, Mauryan and post-Mauryan periods.[39] They bear only incised (punched) symbols, and are devoid of any legends or dates. However, on the basis of their provenance and typology, the more numerous series is ascribed to the imperial Mauryas. Some uninscribed cast copper coins have also been found in certain hoards of silver Punch Marked Coins. The similarity of symbols on two varieties of ancient Indian coins suggests that they belong almost to the same period and, probably, supplemented each other. The pottery attributed to the Mauryan period comprises a variety of wares. However, the most characteristic pottery represented in the Mauryan levels is believed to be Northern Black Polished Ware, a highly evolved pottery type, made of finely levigated clay and marked by a peculiar lustre, brilliance and metallic sound.[40] So far as the monumnets of the Mauryan period are concerned, very little of the reign of Chandragupta Maurya has survived. However, we have literary accounts of the grandeur of Mauryan capital at Pāṭaliputra and the royal palace situated therein, as given by classical writers like Megasthenes, Arrian and Strabo and

their corroboration through excavations at the site of the old city by Weddel[41] and Spooner.[42] The art remains of the time of Asoka are of great value as source material for the social and cultural history of the period. The most important Aśokan monuments are the Aśokan pillars and the beautifully carved capitals placed on the top of the pillars. The popular art of the Mauryan period is exemplified by the Yakṣī of Besnagar, the Yakṣa of Parkham and the *chaurī*-bearing goddess from Dīdārganj. Terracotta objects of various sizes form another category of examples of popular art. Thus, as compared to earlier periods of Indian history, for the study of this period, we are fortunate in having a sudden flood of source material of different kinds.

NOTES

1. Cf. B.C.Law, *India as Described in the Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism,* pp.195ff; Jagdish Chandra Jain, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in Jain Canons*, pp.21ff.
2. G.C. Pande, *Bauddha Dharma Ke Vikāsa Kā Itihāsa*, pp. 155–57; Cf. E.Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, pp. IX, 135; cf. *Sacred Books of the East* Vol. XI, p. x, XIII, p. xxiii.
3. M.Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II.p. 8.
4. *Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.*
5. *Ekapanna Jātaka*, Introduction, Vol. I. No. 149, p. 316; *Catukkanipāta Jātaka*, Introduction, Vol. III. No. 301, p. 1.
6. *Pārājika*, p. 301.
7. '*Ratthaṁ Viluṁpamānanaṁ tesaṁ pi hoti saṅgati,*' *Mahāvagga*, p. 380.
8. *Pārājika*, p. 57.
9. *Mahāvagga*, p. 291.
10. G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya*, pp. 35 ff.
11. *Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.*
12. *Moriyanaṁ khattiyanaṁ vaṁsa jāte.*
13. *Mahābodhivaṁsa*, p. 98.
14. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, VIII, 230.
15. G.M. Bongard-Levin, *Mauryan India*, p. 37; cf. T.Trautmann, *Kautilya and the Arthaśāstra,* pp. 47–48.
16. Cf. B.C. Law, *India as described in early texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, p. 273; *History of Pali Literature*, I. pp. 267 ff.

17. Cf. W. Geiger, *Dīpavaṁsa und Mahāvaṁsa und die geschtlische Uberlieferung in Ceylon*; G. Mendis, 'The Pāli chronicle of Ceylon, An Examination of the Opinions expressed about them since 1879,' *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. IV, 1946, pp. 18–19; C.E. Godakumbura,' The Dīpavaṁsa and the Mahāvaṁsa,' *L.N.Misra Commemoration Volume, Journal of Bihar Research Society*, 1977-78, pp. 729–739.
18. P.H.L. Eggermont, *The Chronology of the Reign of Aśoka Moriya*, pp. 18 ff.
19. Cf. J. Przyluski, *La Legende de l'Emperor Aśoka;* John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka, A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna.*
20. G.M. Bonagard Levin, *op.cit*, pp. 35–36.
21. Cf. *Āryamañjusrīmūlakapa*, ed. G.Ganapati Sastri.
22. *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism*, Tr. from Tibetan by Lama Chimpa and Alka Chattopadhyaya ed. D.P. Chattopadhyaya.
23. The knowledge of the script of Aśokan edicts had been lost for quite sometime as the Chinese travellers failed to find local experts to help them to its correct reading.
24. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 7.
25. Jyoti Prasad Jain, *The Jaina Sources of the History of Ancient India*, pp. 2ff.
26. Shankar Goyal, *Recent Historiography of Ancient India*, pp. 55–56.
27. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* VIII. 320.
28. *Ibid.*, VIII 444; *Samādhimaraṇaṁ prāpya Chandragupto divaṁ yayau*, quoted K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, p. 165n.
29. Shankar Goyal, *op.cit.,* p. 57.
30. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 9; G.Bongard-Levin, *op.cit.*, p. 117; S.R.Goyal, *Kauṭilya and Megasthenes*, pp. 1 ff.
31. Scholars like K.P. Jayaswal (*Hindu Polity*, pp. 203–15), R.K. Mookerji (*Chandragupta Maurya and his Times*, pp. 3–4), F.W. Thomas (*Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 420), R.P. Kangle (*The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra* III, p. 59ff), and a host of others have undrlined points of agreement between the account of Megasthenes and the conditions described in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. T.R.Trautmann did a computer study of the *Arthaśāstra* to examine statistically the authorship and sequence of the different sections of the text, with a view to discovering its composite nature and chronology. He concluded that the work was not written by a single author but is an accretion of earlier texts. It may have been compiled by a single person, but it has no 'one creator', (*Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra*, p. 186). Scholars are, however, sceptical about such a use of computers to analyse texts, cf. L.Sternbach in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 92.4, 1972, pp. 498–500; T. Burrow in *JRAS* (2), pp. 198-99.
32. Cf. R.C. Majumdar, *The Classical Accounts of India*, pp. xx ff. S.R.Goyal, *The Indica of Magasthenes*, pp. 133ff. G.M.Bongard Levin, *op.cit.*, p. 24.
33. Richard Saloman, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 136.

34. I.K.Sarma, J.Varaprasada Rao, *Early Brahmi Inscriptions from Sannati*, p. 25.
35. The edict is also referred to by other names, e.g., Second-Bairat, Calcutta-Bairāṭ, Bhābrū Edict, Rock Edict III etc.
36. Cf. *C.I.I.*Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, Alexander Cunningham, p. 3.
37. Richard Saloman, *op.cit.*, p. 140.
38. Attention has been drawn to two other inscriptions, written in Aramaic, (a) Priyadarśī Inscription embedded in the wall of a house at Sirkap (Takṣaśilā, Pakistan) and (b) a fragmentary inscription found at Lampaka or Laghman (on the northern bank of the Kabul river near Jalālābād), Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp. 7, 239 ff.
39. Durga Prasad, a pioneer Indian numismatist, holds that apart from peacock, the figure of 'Hill-with-Crescent' is a specific Mauryan symbol which appears on most silver Punch Marked Coins found all over the country and also on known Mauryan monuments, cf. *Numismatic Supplement*, pp. 40 ff; cf. John Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India* (British Museum), Vol.I, p. lxxiv.
40. Cf. Mortimer Wheeler, *Early India and Pakistan*, pp. 30–31; *Ancient India*, I, p. 55.
41. L.A. Weddel, *Report on Excavations at Pataliputra*, pp. 22–26.
42. D.B. Spooner, *Archaeological Survey Report*, 1912-13, pp. 73 ff; *Archaeological Survey Report*, Eastern Circle, 1915-16, pp. 27–28; McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature*, p. 42.

III

INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The intellectual and cultural life of India, between the seventh and fifth centuries BC. was undergoing a state of great ferment.[1] Probably, no other period of India's history witnessed as much activity as during this period. Scholars have often referred to this period as the Axis Age[2] marking, indeed, a turning point in the intellectual and spiritual development of the whole world because of great and influential figures of world history, such as, Buddha and Mahāvīra in India, Pythagoros in Greece, Zoraster in Persia, Confucius and Lao Tze in China as also the Old Testament prophets who were all, more or less, contemporaries. Most of these religious and spiritual teachers of the so-called Axis Age tried to rouse their respective people to higher and nobler duties of life. But a more specific aspect of what was crucial about it, and of greater relevance for us, is that it is the period during which religious and intellectual life in India developed several new features. It is these new features which take a strong hold of Indian mind and thought to characterise the conceptual framework of India's world-view in the times to come. In India this crucial period in the world's history was marked, on the one hand, by the Upaniṣadic sages, who admitted the inspiration of the *Vedas*, but questioned, though mildly, the efficacy of the Vedic sacrificial religion,[3] and, on the other hand, by the appearance of Śramaṇic teachers who were less orthodox than they and who rejected the *Vedas* entirely. It was in this

background of spiritual unrest and intellectual ferment that Jainism and Buddhism arose, the most successful of a large number of heterodox ascetic systems, each based on a distinctive set of doctrines and each laying down distinctive rules of conduct for winning salvation. In the *Pāli* texts of the Buddhists,[4] as also, the *Ardhamāgadhī* texts of the Jainas[5] a variety of systems are enumerated. While some of them, e.g. Ājīvikas were atheistic and still believed in the doctrine of *niyati* (destiny) and transmigration, which was unalterable through action, there were others, like Ajita Keśakambalin, who advocated complete materialism and rejected all immaterial categories. To understand the stirring of thought in post-Vedic India, which forms the background of intellectual and cultural developments in the age of the Mauryas, one must look into pre-Vedic or non-Vedic, as well as, Vedic elements of Indian culture. One might have to affirm that the Dravidian and other migrations which had preceded the Aryan ones had left their deep imprints on the culture of this land.

The Śramaṇic movement played an important role in shaping the course of Indian history and culture. Many issues, however, such as, its genesis, antiquity, nature, philosophy etc. are still shrouded under controversies. The term *Śramaṇa* itself has been understood differently by scholars. Deriving it from the root *śrama*, i.e. 'to exert' or 'to labour', the term *Śramaṇa* has been explained by some as a 'toiler' or a person who exerts or labours hard in the search of Truth.[6] Others, taking a cue from the Greek *telos* and the Vedic *charaṇa*, as well as, the cognates of the term in Indo-European languages, hold that primary meaning of *Śramaṇa* is a wanderer. A verse from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (*asya sarve pāpamānaḥ śrameṇa prapathe hatāḥ*, VIII.15, i.e. 'all his sins are slain on the road by *śrama*, i.e., wandering') is adduced to support this rendering. *Ṛg Veda* also refers to '*śrama-yuvaḥ padavyaḥ*', i.e. 'the pedestrian wanderer.' V.S. Pathak was, thus, inclined

to believe that the primitive *Śramaṇa* tradition was a pre-Rgvedic Aryan tradition and the primitive *Śramaṇas* were wandering ascetics of the Aryan stock who migrated to India in the pre-Vedic period. Unlike the other Indo-European tradition of wanderers, i.e. *charaṇa* and *telos*, it was associated neither with gods nor with any rite. Nor had it any sacred literature. Positively speaking, it was characterised by *brahmacarya* and asceticism. The *Śramaṇa saṅgha* consisted of the preceptor and his students who, like sophists, constantly debated the problems of reality, begged alms and moved from place to place. In contrast to the theo-centric *telos* and *charaṇa* the *Śramaṇa* organisations revolved round the preceptor called *Arhat* and *Tīrthaṅkara*.[7]

On the contrary, there is the other view, according to which, the Śramaṇic religion and philosophy, not only had nothing in common with Brāhmaṇic polytheism, sacrificialism and the idea of world-affirmation, it was a tradition quite independent of the Aryans, that is, the Vedic-Brāhmaṇical tradition. G.C. Pande has observed that the Śramaṇic spiritual quest was in sharp contrast to the Vedic one in its attitude towards action and social obligation. Mendicancy implied an irreversible and final rejection of all social claims and obligations and of the efficacy of natural or ritual action in the context of spiritual seeking.[8] It may be added that some of the earliest Jaina canonical works, e.g., *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* and *Ṛṣibhāṣita* clearly distinguish the preachings of the Upaniṣadic, Buddhist, Jaina and other Śramaṇic sects.[9] In the course of the development of Indian thought there are two distinct currents clearly discernible, one having its source in the *Veda*, and the other, seemingly, independent of it. Out of the five marks, mentioned by Dharmakīrti, the seventh-century Buddhist scholar, the first four, viz., the authority of the *Vedas*, the belief in a creator, the path of ritualism and social structure based on hereditary ranks, constitute the four cornerstones of the Brāhmaṇical

tradition, whereas the last, viz. the path of asceticism stands out as the chief characteristic of all the heterodox schools, collectively called the *Śramaṇas*.[10] Thus, an *āstika* was one who accepted the authority of the *Veda* and a *nāstika* was one who rejected it. *Āstika*, *nāstika* and *daiṣṭika* have been distinguished in a famous *sūtra* of Pāṇini.[11] Patañjali explains that these words should be understood, respectively, as 'one who believes that it exists', and 'one who believes that it does not exist' and 'one who believes that it is fated.' As explained in the *Pradīpa* and *Kāśikā* the subject of existence here is the other world or life after death. It seems that the real issue on which the *āstikas*, *nāstikas* and *daiṣṭikas* were divided was the issue of *karman*. The doctrine of *karman* constituted the essential doctrine of the *Śramaṇas* and its impact created an unprecedented ferment in the thought-world in the sixth century BC. Later on, the two traditions *āstika* and *nāstika* have been distinguished as *pravṛtti-dharma* and *nivṛtti-dharma*,[12] which may, respectively, be taken as life-affirming tradition of the Brāhmaṇas and life-negating tradition of the *Śramaṇas*.

While the phenomenal thought-ferment in India of the age of Buddha and Mahāvīra has been noted by several scholars, its genesis and significance have been explained in different ways.[13] As to the relationship between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism, for example, scholarly opinions vary widely. One popular view is to regard Buddhism as a social or philosophical reform movement, while another view holds that 'Buddhism attempted to restore the purity of the ancient way.' Classical Brāhmaṇical tradition, as also many modern historians incline to attribute both the spiritual outlooks to the Vedic tradition. The classical tradition seeks to trace the *pravṛtti-dharma* to the ritualistic aspect of the Vedic religion and *nivṛtti-dharma* to the gnostic side of the same religion, i.e. *karma-kāṇḍa* as against *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, respectively. Swami Vivekananda's theory of the genesis of

Buddhism presupposes a number of traditional views. He believed that Buddhism is a branch of Hinduism and Hinduism in his scheme of things essentially meant Vedānta of the old *Upaniṣads*.[14] Many Western Indologists, such as, Herman Jacobi, T.W. Rhys Davids, H. Oldenberg, *et al*, seem to agree with this view and, thus, attribute the gnostic and ascetic traditions of Indian spirituality to a reformist school within the Vedic tradition evidenced by the *Upaniṣads* and the *Dharmasūtras*. The Buddhist and Jaina systems of thought are supposed to have continued the reformist and anti-ritualistic trends. According to Jacobi, 'the records of the Buddhists and Jainas about the philosophical ideas current at the time of the Buddha and Mahāvīra, meagre though they may be, are of the greatest importance to the historian of that epoch. For they show us, the ground on which, and the materials with which a religious reformer had to build his system.'[15] Rhys Davids observed: 'The philosophical and religious speculations contained in them (the Buddhist and Jaina records) may not have the intrinsic value, either of the Vedānta or of Buddhism, but they are, nevertheless, historically important because they give evidence of a stage less cultured, more animistic, that is to say, earlier.[16] Oldenberg's *Buddha* contains a chapter entitled 'Indian pantheism and pessimism before Buddha' in which he studied the relations between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism. He discovered in the older *Upaniṣads* ideas which, according to him, are closely related to Buddhist ideas. He pointed out the similarity with Buddhist ideas about desire, nescience and the abolition of suffering through knowledge.[17] Paul Deussen, similarly, observed that 'the thoughts of the *Upaniṣads* led in the post-Vedic period not only to the two great religions of Buddhism and Jainism, but also to a series of philosophical systems.'[18]

Investigating the history of Indian thought from the *Vedas* to Mahāvīra, B.M. Barua pointed out: 'The records of most

of the schools of recluse and Brāhmaṇa wanderers have not come down to us, but we have sound reason to believe that the views of these schools can still be found in one or other of the later *Upaniṣads*, in the vast accumulation of *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*.'[19] According to R.G. Bhandarkar, the thought-ferment manifested itself in the north-east of India in an anti-Vedic movement, while in the north-west an attempt was made to reconcile the newer tendencies with orthodoxy. Buddhist and Jaina literatures evince the former whereas the *Gītā* exemplifies the latter.[20] S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade hold the view that this thought-ferment is clearly discernible in the Upaniṣadic literature which provides evidence of heterodox thinkers who did not accept the Vedic tradition.[21] It has also been suggested that the Brāhmaṇical ascetic was the model of the Jainas and the Buddhists. In support of this theory, Jacobi has enumerated resemblances between the Jainist and Buddhist rules of discipline, on the one hand, and the Brāhmaṇical rules of discipline for mendicants, on the other. In the opinion of Jacobi, 'the germs of dissenting sects like those of the Buddhists and Jainas were contained in the institute of the fourth *āśrama*.'[22] Several scholars have, however, shown that the fourth *āśrama* dates much later as an institution of the Aryan Brāhmaṇical society and that in the beginning the latter was hostile to it.[23]

Much has been written, indeed, since 1881, on the relations between the *Upaniṣads* and the *Śramaṇa* movement and a number of scholars are inclined to believe that Buddhism and other contemporary Śramaṇic systems are only an annexure of Brāhmaṇism.[24] The doctrine of transmigration and the law of *karman* had been promulgated by the Brāhmaṇas and Nirvāṇa is nothing other than an atheistic deformation of Nirvāṇa in *Brahman*. There is the other extreme views of La Vallèe Poussin. In the preface to the new edition of his *Buddhism* (1925), he remarked that

on the relations between the *Upaniṣads* and ancient Buddhism arbitrary judgements were given. An intermediate position, between the two extremes, has been taken by some other scholars. The bibliography on this topic is rather large and a critical appraisal of even some of the most important publications would require a lot of space. Vedic origins for the Śramaṇic movement were generally advocated by 19th century scholars who were constrained by the paucity of materials, especially archaeological, required for any objective understanding of the Indian situation. Oldenberg, for example, believed that the Buddhists had, probably, not known the Brāhmaṇical texts, nevertheless, he did not hesitate to state that Buddhism has not only inherited from Brāhmaṇism many of its important dogmas, but also the mood of religious thought and sentiments.[25]

The untenability of Brāhmaṇical origins for the Śramaṇic thought notwithstanding, one notices some echoes of Śramaṇic ideas in the old *Upaniṣads*, which tend to differ from the older Vedic texts on fundamental doctrinal points. The thrust of the Vedic thought as developed in the *Upaniṣads*, is still one of positive and robust outlook on life which does not deny life as unreal or reject it as evil, but instead seeks to affirm that there is a higher reality behind what we see and which gives ultimate value to human life and quest. There is also no doubt, that the *Upaniṣads* are not unacquainted with the ideas of *karma* and transmigration. It is, however, equally clear that they do not wholly break away from the positive and life-affirming ethos of the earlier Vedic tradition, and although they transmute the idea of the gods, they do not adopt an atheistic point of view. As regards the Vedic ritualism, the *Upaniṣads* sometimes esoterically reinterpret them, occasionally reject them and, more often, ignore them in favour of a moral, contemplative and gnostic life. The sacrifices may have some validity, but they cannot save a man from death. The Upaniṣadic point

of view is, thus, a development of Vedicism and a half-turn towards Śramaṇism, or rather, a position where further interaction between Brāhmaṇism and Śramaṇism could take place, an interaction which did take place in the subsequent ages and had profoundest effects on the origin and development of Buddhism, Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.[26] Thus, we see in the *Upaniṣads* a great change of ideas in so far as their central quest comes to be to gain emancipation from the cycle of existence. The heterogeneity of Upaniṣadic speculations, contrasted with the *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇas* clearly shows infusion of extraneous elements and intimations of certain new ideas. The doctrines of transmigration (*punarjanma*), action (*karma*) and emancipation (*mokṣa*) do not seem to follow from the Vedic tradition. The Upaniṣadic doctrines, though generally represent a continuation of the Vedic religion but when they enumerate the ideas of transmigration, *karma* and *mokṣa* they seem to be subscribing to the Śramaṇic values of asceticism, *tapas*, *brahmacarya,* etc. Scholars like S.K. Chatterji and R.P.Chanda have attributed *pravṛtti-dharma* and *nivṛtti-dharma*, respectively, to two different ethnic traditions, i.e., Aryans and non-Aryans. However, even in the Indus civilisation one can discern both these tendencies – *pravṛtti-dharma* in the worship of Mother-Goddess and fertility cult and *nivṛtti-dharma* in the worship of Paśupati and *Yogī*.[27]

Some scholars are inclined to the theory that social and religious changes are not wholly unconnected. They would attribute the rise of the ascetic movements in India to the social and economic changes implicit in the break-up of the tribal and pastoral society, rise of classes and castes, urbanisation and so on. The first important work subscribing to this theory was C.F.Koppen's *Die Religion des Buddha* (2 Vols. 1857–59), wherein Buddha was viewed as the emancipator of the oppressed and a great political innovator.[28] It is interesting to note that Koppen was a great

friend of Marx and Engels, and the latter, in establishing the principles of dialectical materialism in Buddhist ideas, used Koppen's understanding of Buddhism as his only source. Koppen was severely criticised by his contemporaries and subsequent Buddhologists for relegating the highly spiritual contents of Buddha's teaching to the gross mortal human level. Despite the major trend of thinking of the 19th century idealistic philosophers of Europe, which subscribed to the Mahāyānic concept of suffering as caused by the non-understanding of the world as a void entity, stray reflections that the concept of suffering must have a material basis were also formulated intermittently. Oldenberg, in his *Buddha*, characterised the essence of Buddhism as pessimism and came out with an amusing theory that this was due to the weak physiological constitution of the inhabitants of eastern India.[29] T.W. Rhys Davids' *Buddhist India* contains accounts of the growth of social classes, urbanism, etc. Contributing a chapter in the *Cambridge History of India* he has described the pre-Buddhist conditions and their impact on Buddhist ideas with special reference to the tribal life, social system, etc.[30]

The great German Sociologist Max Weber, who has attempted a systematic study of the connection between religion and society, in the second volume of his collected essays on the Sociology of Religion and his principal work *Wirtschaft und Gasellschaft* has also approached the study of Buddhism in the above manner.

D.D. Kosambi articulated the issue of material basis and suggested that the Vedic ritual was the formulation of a pastoral society where large herds, collectively owned, were the main form of property. When the society moved over to agriculture, the slaughter of more and more animals at a growing number of sacrifices meant a much heavier drain upon producer and production, telling upon the trading class and the new economic structure. Thus, the Buddhist

and Jaina emphasis on *ahiṁsā*, non-killing were caused by economic reasons and so were the other similar values such as truth, justice, non-encroachment upon the possessions of others, conceived to serve the new concept of private individual property.[31] According to Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, the Buddha was overwhelmed by the stupendous social transformation and wholesale bloodshed of his time. The Buddha responded to this crisis by asking the people to join his order, modelled on the pattern of a tribal democracy and meant to be the ideal substitute for a vanished way of life.[32] In the opinion of R.S. Sharma the primary factor that revolutionised the material life of the people around 700 BC in eastern U.P. and Bihar, the birth place of Buddhism, was the use of iron which initiated agriculture with iron ploughshares, and consequently created a new social set-up, a class society marked by the rise of state power, in which cattle, in the form of private wealth, to be increased by commercial activities, gained much importance, and their senseless destruction for the purpose of non-vegetarian food and Brāhmaṇical sacrificial cults came to be discouraged. The protest was raised by the trading class which received theoretical and moral support at the hands of the Buddha and his contemporaries.[33] Romila Thapar also holds the view that the Hindu and the Buddhist traditions arose out of two disparate socio-economic backgrounds. The Hindu law was formulated in a tribal society and the Buddhist tradition originated at a time when tribal loyality was changing into territorial loyality. In her view, the element of social protest in Buddhism was limited to providing intellectual encouragement and justification for the formation of a new elite.[34]

Evidently, the views of scholars, such as, C.F. Koppen, D.D. Kosambi, Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, R.S. Sharma, Romila Thapar *et al.,* are modifications on the basic premise to attribute this change in human consciousness to a change

in social being.[35] However, a considerable amount of new material, which has come to light in the course of recent archaeological excavations, has contributed much to a better understanding of the period beginning with the eclipse of the proto-historic Harappan culture and that of the birth and rise of Buddhism in large parts of India. Attention may, for example, be drawn towards new archaeological finds suggesting a very early antiquity of iron in the south-eastern Uttar Pradesh.[36] These finds have come mainly from such ancient sites as Rājā Nal-kā-tīlā in district Sonbhadra and Malhār in district Chandauli, both being located in the Karamnāsā valley well within the plateau area of the north Vindhyas. Jhūsī, near Allahabad, has also yielded early evidence of iron. The radiocarbon dates of Rājā Nala-kā-tīlā, Malhār and Jhūsī show that, out of eight dates available for the evidence of early iron in the region, three (two from Rājā Nala-kā-tīlā and one from Jhūsī) are around 1000-1100 B.C. and two from Rājā Nala-kā-tīlā record around 1200 BC, while one date from Malhār goes further back to about 1600 BC. The associated ceramic industries were represented by the black-and-red ware, black slipped ware and red ware, which were once supposed to be characteristic representative of the Chalcolithic period. Thus, on the basis of stratigraphy, types and shapes of the pottery and the radiocarbon dates the antiquity of iron may be placed before 1500 BC in south-eastern Uttar Pradesh, an area, which is not far from the cradle of Buddhism and Jainism. It may be added, that this is not the only area which has yielded early dates for iron. Some other important sites which may be mentioned in this context include Gufkrāl in Jammu and Kashmir, Hallūr and Komāranhallī in Karnataka, Veerapuram in Andhra Pradesh, Adam in Maharashtra, Āhar and Noh in Rajasthan, Eraṇ in Madhya Pradesh and Atarañjikherā and Jakherā in Uttar Pradesh. So far as the Gaṅgā basin is concerned, it became available in the P.G.W.

period and became more widespread during the N.B.P. phase. Whereas the earliest iron objects found from south-eastern Uttar Pradesh include tools, such as, nails, arrowheads, knife, chisel and slag, the N.B.P. level assemblage of iron objects in the Gaṅgā basin comprised chisels, arrowheads, spearheads, daggers, nails, knives, hooks, barbs, crobars, spikes, handles, sickles and smith's anvil. What is important to note is that iron-axe, plain or socketed, iron hammer and iron ploughshare are conspicuous by their absence in the finds of these sites. Thus, no iron implement that could have been used for large-scale forest clearance, as well as, reclamation of arable land and extensive agricultural activity have been discovered so far for the period up to c. 500 BC. Instead, iron was being used primarily for manufacturing the weapons of war.[37] Dilip Chakrabarti has also shown that earlier Chalcolithic elements continue to occur in a significant quantity at all the sites even after the beginning of the use of iron and, therefore, no revolutionary role can be attributed to iron in the social changes preceding the sixth century BC.[38]

In fact, the whole question of a rural-agricultural impetus to the rise of Buddhism has been challenged in the light of some recent evidences, which show that the original teachings of the Buddha are to be seen as 'an urban response' to suffering and that the Buddha was not addressing a rural audience but the urban classes who were divorced from the farmer's world.[39] B.G. Gokhale has analysed the evidence of the *Pāli* texts *Theragāthā*, *Therīgāthā* and *Paramatthadīpanī* and has shown that the composition of the Buddhist elite group was predominatly urban in character, as over seventy-one per cent of them hailed from urban areas, whereas their representation from rural areas was hardly twenty per cent. Even the advent of iron technology, instead of revolutionising agriculture, is construed to have been instrumental in the creation of fixed

territorial states *(mahājanapadas)* in the sixth century BC. That the subsequent rise of Magadha to a pre-eminent position in the succeeding centuries was, probably, due to its iron wealth may explain the position more cogently. Rise of the capitals of all these *mahājanapadas*, as centres of political power and socio-cultural activities, heralded the second urbanisation in India. It is also argued that the essential urban connection of Buddhism can be better understood if we keep in mind the fact that it became a popular religion only during the Mauryan period when towns had become a dominant factor in the society.[40] This supposed relationship between Buddhism and urbanism in ancient India, however, needs to be investigated further. An attempt to compare the rise of Jainism and Buddhism in India with the Protestant movement in the medieval Christian Church,[41] does not seem to carry conviction. Contrary to Protestantism, the Jaina and Buddhist movements were ascetic and monastic in character, without any tendency towards 'secularisation.'[42]

Similarly, although, theoretically, Buddhism was opposed to the caste system, and its practice was not allowed in the *saṅgha*, still Buddhism as a social force did not strive to abolish this system through which Indian class society functioned throughout the ages. In the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* it is said, the Buddhas could be born only in two higher castes, Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas. In some dialogues the Buddha even takes pride as a Kṣatriya. All this does not appear consistent with the theory that the Buddha was a crusader against caste and Buddhism was a casteless religion. People and classes in distress sometimes tend to welcome a new religious message promising deliverance. We have examples in the *Pāli* canon, where people have opted to take refuge in the Buddhist *saṅgha* in order to escape some hard situations in life.[43] Thus, while some might opt for the strenuous ascetic way of life out of an autonomous spiritual seeking, some might be tempted to adopt it with a view to escaping the hardships

inflicted on them in the ordinary course of life. Social, economic and political factors, probably served as suitable occasions and not as causes for the widespread *Śramaṇa* movements.

These movements are, sometimes, taken to symbolise a kind of Kṣatriya challenge to the spiritual leadership of the Brāhmaṇas.[44] Again, there is not much to commend a contrived opposition of the Brāhmaṇas by the Kṣatriyas. Buddha and Mahāvīra, the foremost thinkers of the age were, no doubt, Kṣatriyas but they had been preceded by an illustrious list of royal philosophers, such as, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali of Pañcāla,[45]Ajātaśatru of Kāśī,[46] Aśvapati of Kekaya,[47] Janaka of Videha[48] *et. al.*, some of whom acted even as teachers of the Brāhmaṇas. There is mention of *Kṣatriya-vidyā*[49] and *Yoga* tradition communicated from one generation to another among the *rājarṣis* (royal sages).[50] The frequent mention of the first two v*arṇas* in an inverted order in the Buddhist literature is rather off set by such references in the same texts where we see Brāhmaṇas inviting *Śramaṇas* or themselves joining the ascetic sects. The *Śramaṇa* sects attracted both Brāhmaṇas, as well as Kṣatriyas. While there may be some truth in many of the views discussed above, it would be appropriate to regard Śramaṇism as an autonomous expression of religious thought and experience which must be viewed in and through itself and its own principles and standards. It would be hard to deny that there must have been genuine seekers and ascetics. The seeds of asceticism were already present in the intellectual and spiritual soil waiting for a suitable opportunity to sprout which was provided in the thought-ferment of the sixth-fifth centuries BC.

It may be noted that references to the word *Śramaṇa* in the Vedic literature are very rare. In one of these (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* IV,3,22) the *Śramaṇa* is placed side by side with *tāpasa*[51] (i.e., practitioner of religious

austerities – derived from *tap*, to warm) indicating that a *Śramaṇa* like *tāpasa* belonged to the class of mendicants. In the *Pāli* and the *Ardhamāgadhī* texts the compound word '*Śramaṇa*-Brāhmaṇa (*Samaṇa vā Brāhmaṇa vā*)' is of common occurrence and clearly refers to two distinct groups of holy men, i.e. mendicants and upholders of the Vedic tradition, respectively. The '*Śramaṇa*–Brāhmaṇa' dichotomy has been noted by Pāṇini,[52] Patañjali and Megasthenes,[53] as also, the inscriptions of Aśoka.[54] The Buddhist *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Indica* of Megasthenes and the inscriptions of Aśoka indicate that heterodox sects claimed equality of status for *Śramaṇas* with the Brāhmaṇas. The hostility between the two traditions seems to have been very marked, as Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya*, cites *Śramaṇa*–Brāhmaṇa, together with 'cat and mouse,' 'dog and fox' and 'snake and mongoose,'[55] as illustrations of such hostility. Several centuries later, Hemacandra (12th Cen. AD), himself a *Śramaṇa* (a Jaina monk) cites this example in an identical context, thus, highlighting the conventional animosity between the *Śramaṇas* and the Brāhmaṇas that permeated medieval Indian Society.[56]

The ethos of Śramaṇic philosophy, as well as the figuration of its development through time do not seem to be compatible with the Vedic tradition. One has to look, therefore, to some non-Vedic, and may be, non-Aryan source for the origins of this stream of thought.[57] The existence of *munis* or ascetic sages of non-Vedic cultural tradition in pre-Aryan and, probably, non-Aryan Harappan culture is indicated by the sculptures of men in the posture of *yoga* and *dhyāna*. Several seals from the Harappan sites depict a horned god seated in a cross-legged posture of the later Indian *yogīs*, surrounded by animals, and who is identified by S.J. Marshall with Paśupati, Śiva of later Hinduism. There are also found a few figures in terracotta of nude men with coiled hair; their posture, rigidly upright, resembles that of

the later day Jaina images in *kāyotsarga* posture.[58] Their survival in the Vedic age is indicated by some stray references to rather unfamiliar figures of *munis, yatis,* etc. The earliest literary evidence for *munis* comes from the *Ṛg Veda.* The word *muni* occurs once in a hymn to the Maruts (RV,VII 56.8). Here it appears to mean a person in ecstasy. At another place (RV, VIII.3.5) Indra is said to have been the friend of the *munis* (*Indromunināṁ sakhā*). The third and the most important mention of the *munis* occurs in the famous *Keśī Sūkta* (RV, X.136). It delineates for us the strange figure of a *muni* who is described as long haired (*Keśī*), clad in dirty, tawny coloured garments (*piśaṅgā vasate malā*), walking in the air (*vātaraśanāḥ*) or flying (*antarikṣeṇa patati*), delirious with the state of being a *muni* (*unmaditamaunayena*) and inspired (*deviṣṭa*). He enjoyed friendship with Vāyu (*Vāyoḥ sakhātho*) and drank poison with Rudra (*Keśī viṣasya pātreṇa yad Rudreṇapibat saḥ*). Following the moving wind (*vātasyānudhrajiṁ yanti*) he attained the status of god (*yaddevāso avikṣata*). Mortal people (*martāso*) could only see his body (*śarīra*) and no more. He cleared the path of sylvan beasts, *gandharvas* and *apsarās* (*apsarasāṁ gandharvānaṁ mṛgāṇaṁ charaṇe charaṇ*). Many traits of the personality of the *muni* are rather enigmatic but it is obvious that he is described as *Keśī* (long haired) and that he used ochre-robes and had distinctive condition of ecstasy (*mauneya*). His association with the Rudra cult is also quite evident. The reference to the drinking of poison by Rudra with a *muni* may be the basis of the later *viṣapāna* legend of Śiva, while his association with sylvan beasts reminds one of the Paśupati aspect of this deity. His description as *Keśī* (long-haired) reminds one of the *Keśīs* and *Jaṭilas* of the sixth century BC both of which belonged to the heterodox tradition. Obviously, the author of the *Keśī Sūkta* regarded the *munis* as different from the *ṛsis,* the celebrated custodians of the Vedic tradition. It has been observed that the Vedic Aryans

were filled with a certain sense of wonder and awe at the sight of miracle performing *munis*.[59]

Quite like the strange and awe-inspiring figure of *munis*, the Vedic literature also takes notice of *yatis* who again, perhaps, belonged to the non-Vedic ascetic tradition. The *Pañcaviṁśa* (X. 14.4) and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇas* (VII 8) mention the killing of *yatis* by Indra. Sāyaṇa explains the term *yati* as 'people opposed to the sacrifices (*yajñavirodhī-janān*) and endowed with rules contrary to the *Vedas* (*vedaviruddhaniyamopetān*). P.V. Kane, however, opines that *munis*, practising meditation and mortification, were mendicants of the Aryan descent while *yatis* were their counterparts of the non-Aryan descent.[60] Attention may also be drawn towards a tradition of the *vrātyas* existing in the earliest phases of Indian life and thought. In the Vedic literature the ritual practices of the *vrātyas* are described as *anya-vrata*.[61] Their earliest reference occurs in the *Atharvaveda*, wherein the *vrātya* is exalted to the position of the Supreme Being, *Mahādeva*.[62] According to Sāyaṇa, the word stands for the 'fallen'. He wanders here and there in company with a harlot and a *māgadha* (a bard from Magadha, the cradle of *Śramaṇa* culture) and arrives in the courts of kings as an *atithi*. He is described as a *vidvān* (learned) and his hosts are warned against reviling him. *Āpastaṁba Dharmasūtra* derives it from the root '*vrata*' and explains the term *vrātya* as a '*śrotriya*' or religious mendicant who has learnt one recension of the *Veda* - a faithful following of his vows.[63] For Baudhayana, a *vrātya* is 'a son of an uninitiated man.'[64] According to *Manusmṛti* and *Viṣṇudharma Purāṇa*, the term *vrātya* stands for 'one who has let go the proper time for the sacrament of initiationship (*sāvitrīpatitaḥ*).'[65] In the *Mahābhārata*, the *vrātya* is defined as the son of a Śudra and a Kṣatriya woman.[66] Böthlingk and Roth interpret the term as a 'pious vagrant or a wandering religious mendicant.'[67] As regards the antecedents of the *vrātyas*,

scholars are a divided lot. While generally agreeing that etymologically *vrātya* should be derived from '*vrāta,*' i.e.' tribe, some scholars take them to be a non-Aryan tribe, whereas others advocate their Aryan descent.[68] Nevertheless, the early beginnings of Monotheism, the doctrines of *karma* and rebirth, *yoga, bhakti* and asceticism have been traced to the *vrātya* tradition. The *vrātyas*, who, probably, were dissident or renegade Aryans, along with the *yatis*, mentioned above, appear to be the forerunners of the later *Śramaṇas.*

Thus, the ideal of asceticism should be taken to have come down to the Jainas and Buddhists not from the Brāhmaṇas but from previously existing sects like *munis, yatis,* etc. That *Śramaṇas* formed a class distinct from the Brāhmaṇas is evident from the fact that, by the time of the Buddha, they had come to have a great antiquity. The Jainas cherish the legends of twenty-three 'past' Jinas, who appeared before Mahāvīra. The Buddhists also maintain a tradition of twenty-four 'past' Buddhas who flourished before Śākyamuni. It is impossible to establish the historicity of all the 'former' Jinas and Buddhas. But the significance of these legends certainly lies in their claim of, respectively, being pre-Jinist and pre-Buddhist in antiquity. The *Śramaṇas*, also known as *parivrājakas*, *bhikkhus*, *samaṇas*, *yatis*, *sanyāsins*, etc., did not subscribe to the authority of the *Vedas* nor did they believe in the existence of God in the sense of a personal creator or determiner of destiny. For this reason, *Śramaṇa* philosophies were described in later times as *nāstika* or nihilist. Originally, however, *nāstika* could properly apply only to the materialists. The Vedic religion emphasised social and ritual obligations, happiness in this world, as in the other, and hoped to gain it from the gods. But the idea of a beginningless cycle of lives, governed by an overreaching law of *karma* from which freedom could come only by the total renunciation of all the claims and impulses of instinctive life, is rather alien to

the general ethos of the early Vedic thought. Heterodoxy in Indian thought should, therefore, be traced to a pre-Vedic and non-Aryan Śramaṇic stream, an independent, though little known tradition, which appears to be represented by wandering ascetics and *yogīs* surviving from pre-Vedic times and called *munis* in the Vedic literature and *Śramaṇas* in the age of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. They held towards the world an attitude of ascetic pessimism, disbelieved in a personal cause or creator of the universe, accepted a plurality of souls and an ultimate distinction between soul and matter, regarded the world of common sense as real and as due to one or more real factors, at least, partly independent of soul and, consequently, regarded as indispensable for salvation some form of strenuous practical discipline aimed at effecting a real alteration in the situation of things.[69] Emphasis on moral values of *ahiṁsā* and *karuṇā* and the idea of the ultimate unity of life in all its forms are the other contributions of Śramaṇism to Indian culture and thought. One might say that these Ś*ramaṇas* were, in general, ascetic, atheistic, pluralistic and realistic. The essential basis of this world-view seems to have been the idea of s*aṁsāra* – of *karma* and transmigration. It is these features which distinguish the pre-Vedic and non-Aryan Śramaṇic world-view from the Vedic Brāhmaṇical world-view.

The convergence of the two traditions, the Brāhmaṇic and Śramaṇic, blossomed forth in the form of new ascetic movements and the appearance of two major Śramaṇic religions, Buddhism and Jainism, marked the end of the Vedic-Brāhmaṇic period and the beginning of a new era of cross-fertilisation between the diverse strata of Indian tradition. It is through such interactions and processes of assimilation that the Brāhmaṇic order eventually got transformed into Hindu culture. Thus, it was this eventful period of intensive thought- ferment of the sixth-fifth centuries BC which brought about the change in the Indian

world view. It is this period during which a transition was made from religious practices that were predominantly exoteric to religious practices that were predominantly esoteric; from religious concerns that were world-centred to religious concerns that were person-centred. And it was the particular ways in which this person- centredness was understood that abounded north-eastern India with a variety of religious and philosophical thinkers.

Beside Gautama Buddha and Mahāvīra, there emerged a large number of thinkers, who propagated their views in the sixth-fifth centuries BC. There is little information about these non-Vedic sects (*avaidikas*) but some can be found in such works as *Sūyagadāṅga*, the second book of the Śvetāmbara Jaina canon in *Ardhamāgadhī* and Buddhist *sūtras* like the *Brahmajāla* and *Sāmaññaphala* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* in *Pāli*. The Jaina *sūtras* mention as many as 363 such sects, while according to the Buddhist *sūtras* the number is 62 or 63. The Buddhist texts appear to speak of all the non-Vedic or non-Brāhmaṇic systems as *Śramaṇas* in the frequent expression '*Samaṇa vā Brāhmaṇa vā*'. The Jainas group the 363 sects broadly into four categories, viz., *kriyāvāda*, *akriyāvāda*, *ajñānavāda* and *vinayavāda*. Early Buddhist texts frequently mention six heretical (*tiṭṭhiyas*)[70] teachers, who were all contemporaries of the Buddha and enjoyed considerable respect in the Gangetic valley. The Buddhist text *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* alluding to an incident that took place towards the closing years of Buddha's life, gives an account of the six 'heretical' *Śramaṇa* teachers.[71] The dialogue takes place between the Buddha and Ajātasatru who had ascended the throne of Magadha, after killing his father Bimbisāra. Ajātaśatru, after pointing out the advantages derived by the ordinary house-holders from pursuing their manifold activities, asked the Buddha, whether the members of the *saṅgha* derived any corresponding advantage, visible in this life, by following the

life of a recluse (*Śramaṇa*)? The Buddha counter-questioned the king if he had ever appraoched other *Śramaṇas* and Brāhmaṇas with that question? The reply given by Ajātasatru delineates the earliest account of the six Śramaṇic philosophical systems, among which were included the doctrines of materialism, scepticism, agnosticism, atheism, fatalism, pessimism and so on. The Jaina texts also speak of a number of contemporary philosophical dogmas, viz., (i) *kālavāda*, (ii) *svabhāvavāda*, (iii) *niyativāda*, (iv) *yaḍrcchāvāda* etc.[72] The number of thinkers who led the intellectual quest of the period was surprisingly very large. Whether their number was sixty-two or not, there is no doubt, that diverse systems prevailed, ranging from rank atheism and unabashed materialism to mechanical piety and quickened spirituality. Thus, the variety of thinkers, which emerges in this age, definitely shows a departure from the past, a transition from the winding highway of Vedic tradition into new byways of heterodoxy essaying intellectual and spiritual adventure. They are, sometimes, compared with the Greek Sophists. In point of intellectual vigour and variety the comparison is quite apt, but one must keep the fact in mind, that the Indian thinkers were seeking after the spiritual and practising '*brahmacarya*' in the sense of 'discipline for the realisation of the Most High.'[73]

A number of modern writers have offered detailed explanation of the views of these thinkers and their systems by extensively tapping the information available in the Jaina and Buddhist texts.[74] We shall, therefore, merely indicate here the principal tendencies of the age. The first category of views concerns the ancient problem of cosmology and cosmogony wherein the thinkers seek to discover the origin of the world and the soul as also the nature of the two. An interesting variety of views was held over these problems. Some of the thinkers subscribed to eternalism (*sassatvāda*) upholding the perennial existence of the world and the

soul.[75] Others were semi-eternalists (*ekaccasassatavādins*), advocating both the eternalist and non-eternalist views.[76] In their opinion, the soul and the world are partly eternal and partly non-eternal. Further, there were extentionalists or limitists and unlimitists (*antānantika*). They held the view that the world is neither finite nor infinite.[77] Also there were fortuitous orginists (*abhiccasamuppannika*) holding that the world and the soul arise without a cause.[78] Regarding the views of the second category, it may be mentioned that, apart from discussions on the soul as a part of cosmogony, there was a tendency to speculate over the nature of the self exclusively. There was a doctrine of conscious soul after death (*udhamāghātanikasaññivāda*) wherein belief in the existence of a conscious soul after death was subscribed in sixteen different ways.[79] Contrary to this, there was also the theory of unconscious soul after death.[80] Another doctrine upheld a nihilistic view on soul (*ucchedavāda*) which sought to establish a nihilistic end for the living being.[81] The third category consists of views, which speculated on the possibility of liberation in this life (*diṭṭhadhammanibbānavāda*). This type of speculation led to the formulation of five different ways conceiving the possibility of liberation.[82] There was another category, which consisted of agnostic and sceptic thinkers. Such thinkers took to equivocation when they were confronted with a situation requiring them to draw a distinction between good and evil action, and they refused to give their own verdict.[83] Thus, Makkhali Gośāla, the great leader of the Ājīvika sect, is said to have been the most prominent *akriyāvādin,* who upheld the doctrine of *saṁsāra* but rejected altogether the possibility of individual initiative in gaining final liberation.[84] Puraṇa Kassapa[85] and Pakudha Kaccāyana[86] were the other *akriyāvādins.* As against this, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta was the most rigorous teacher of *kriyāvāda.*[87] Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta, according to the Buddhist accounts, was an agnostic teacher, who did not really try to

find out the truth and declared it to be undiscoverable. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta* a follower of this sect has been described as *amarāvikkhepika*, that is, one who when asked a question, would equivocate and wriggle out like an eel. Similarly, Ajita Keśakambalī was a materialistic thinker of the time,[88] probably the earliest representative of Indian materialism. He believed that a human being is made of the four elements (*cātummahābhūtiko ayaṁ puriso*). When he dies, the earthy in him relapses to earth, the fluid to water, the heat to fire, the windy to air, and his faculties (*indriyāṇi*), five senses and the mind (as the sixth) pass into space (*ākāśa*). When the body dies, both the foolish and the wise alike perish. They do not survive after death.

It is also interesting to note that there was considerable rivarly between the different schools of thought, more especially the three prominent ones, viz., the Buddhists, Jainas and the Ājīvikas. The tensions arose not only from dogmatic differences but also from conversionary zeal. Thus, a group of Buddhist monks are sadly dismayed at being mistaken for Ājīvika ascetics, while the Ājīvikas besiege the home of their wealthy patron Migara when he prepares to entertain the Buddhist *saṅgha*.[89] There are incidents in the Buddhist texts referring to Buddha's efforts to convert dissenters to his creed. According to the *Mahāvagga*, a thousand Jaṭila ascetics joined the Buddhist order.[90] Conversions were also not always achieved by peaceful means. The *Mahāvagga* relates the story as to how some noble citizens of Rājagṛha protested against a mass assembly of th*e saṅgha* which had members of their families. The *Dīgha Nikāya* relates the story of a rich and influential Brāhmaṇa, Śoṇadaṇḍa from Champā, who, despite his co-religionists' protests, visited the Buddha and invited him and the *saṅgha* to partake of a meal.[91] The *Divyāvadāna's* account of the miracle contest at Sāvatthī suggests a riot of ascetics.

While the earlier strata of the *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī*

texts reflect conditions of the fifth-fourth centuries B.C. the Vedic literature refers to a period of quite indefinite length, which, however, seems to have ended about 600 BC. If we compare the milieu of the earlier stratum of the *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* texts with the later Vedic literature we find great differences in the cultural background against which they were, respectively, composed. These differences are, no doubt, partly due to geography, for the Vedic texts refer to region further to the west than that in which the *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* scriptures arose. But the main reason for the difference must surely be chronological and cultural. Although the social and cultural background of the Śramaṇic movement cannot be traced as clearly as one would have wished, yet it is evident that heterodoxy flourished most strongly in what is now the state of Bihar and the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh. The very name Bihar is attributed to the establishment of numerous *vihāras* (monasteries) which proliferated in the area in ancient times. The seat of the Vedic Brāhmaṇical culture, situated near present day Delhi in the west of India (*Kuru-Pañcāla* region) appears to have lost most of its former power and had become subordinate to Videha and Magadha in the east, both in status and as the breeding ground of philosophical ideas. In the east the arrival of Aryan civilisation and Brāhmaṇical religion must have been comparatively recent at the time as the people were little affected by the Aryan class system and the impact of Brāhmaṇical culture was by no means complete. The region of Magadha was looked down upon as impure and the Licchavis were described as *vrātyas*.[92] Quite as much attention was paid here to local folk gods, such as, *yakṣas* and *nāgas,* worshipped at sacred mounds (*caityas*) and groves as to the deities of the Aryan religion. Big cities and towns had developed, where a class of well-to-do merchants lived in comparative opulence, while the free peasants who made up the majarity of the population enjoyed, as far as can be

gathered, a somewhat higher standard of living than the people today when the pressure of population and exhaustion of the soil etc. have so gravely improvised them. The Buddhist and Jaina scriptures testify the emergence of a very influential trading community organised in guilds. We hear of fabulously rich merchants like Yaśa of Kāśī, Meṇḍaka of Aṅga, Anāthapiṇḍika of Kośala and Ghoṣaka of Kauśāmbī.

A completely new pattern of political structure was beginning to take shape in this period. The age of migrations was over and the territorial element had gained preponderance over the tribal in the organisation of state. The *Pāli Vinaya* knows of two types of states, monarchical and republican. The former is named after the region, such as, the kingdom of Magadha, the kingdom of Kośala etc., and the latter is named after the people collectively called together, like the dominion of the Licchavis, of the Śākyas and so on. As in the 'Period of contending states in China' a trial of strength was taking place between the monarchies and, what is more, between the monarchical and the non-monarchical or republican forms of government. These contests, inevitably resulted in the decline of republics, on the one hand, and the rise of absolutism, on the other, leading to the ultimate success of Magadhan imperialism. The Buddhist and Jaina texts refer to the havoc caused by political wars, tyranny, lawlessness and immorality.

Between the death of Ajātaśatru, in whose reign the Buddha attained Parinirvāṇa, and the accession of Chandragupta Maurya, the sources speak mainly of court intrigues and murders. It appears that the throne changed hands quite frequently, perhaps, with more than one incumbent claiming to occupy it at the same time. Eventually, it was occupied by Mahāpadma, the founder of a new dynasty of the Nandas, who was not only a usurper but son of a barber,[93] Mahānandin or Nandivardhana, by a Śūdra woman.

According to the orthodox *Purāṇas*, he invoked his caste status to conduct a vendetta against all Kṣatriyas. He is described as a second Paraśurāma, 'the exterminator of the entire Kṣatriya race' and as one who made himself the sole sovereign in the country and brought it under the umbrella of one authority which was not to be challenged. As most of the contemporary rulers were, or claimed to be Kṣatriaya, this must have appeared as a declaration of war on the entire political order. Thus, by 326 B.C. the Nanda dynasty was ruling over a greatly extended empire which extended up to the river Godāvarī, if not beyond, and included Kaliṅga, i.e. north-eastern Deccan up to Viśākhāpatanam, and, thus, its boundary abutted on the sea.[94] The Nanda dynasty, undeniably, commanded the most formidable standing army yet known in India. It was certainly enough to strike terror in the Greek army to awaken in their hearts the fond memories of Thracian wine and a pining homesickness and to send them packing back. The wealth of the Nandas also became legendary, and was supposedly buried in a cave in the bed of the Gaṅgā. Their exactions and unpopularity, became the main grounds of their overthrow from the Magadhan seat of power. Even the Macedonian invasion, under Alexander the Great in 326 BC, seems to have played a crucial role in creating a political situation in northern India, which indirectly facilitated the expansion of the Magadhan empire. By defeating the clans and kingdoms of north-western India and the Punjab, Alexander actually created a vast political vacuum which, after the withdrawal of the Greeks, Chandragupta Maurya was quick to fill. The significant political developments seem to have generated much discussion, and political science is supposed to have taken its birth in this period, to mature finally in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.

While the Jainas protested against the rampant violence and bloodshed,[95] the Buddhists formulated an ideal of

'Universal Moral Ruler', which the most famous emperor of ancient India attempted to put into practice.[96] Toynbee has tried to situate the Buddha in the 'Times of Troubles' of the Indic World.[97] The enormous political and social changes taking place in north-eastern India furnish only a partial explanation, as, indeed, these profound changes were paralleled by considerable religious ferment generated by the Śramaṇic movements. In the backdrop of armed conflicts and deteriorating atmosphere the people at large felt oppressed and tired of such unpleasant state of affairs. In such an atmosphere if someone preached peace, non-violence to every living being, a righteous conduct which may lead to salvation, is more likely to be welcomed than any other time. The adoption of ascetic principles required a firm faith in spiritual happiness and as firm a despair of material life. Its wide prevalence in a society bespeaks not only the acuteness of its religious consciousness but also considerable social disstress.

The religious movements, as stated above, may well be reflections of a desire for security in the midst of flux and change. In an atmosphere when the political horizon of northern India was overcast with fierce struggle between mighty states, such as, Kośala, Vatsa, Avanti, Magadha, Vajji and others vying for supremacy and when material life was advancing at a fast pace with rapid expansion of economy, one would expect positive and pragmatic world-view to develop. What happens instead, is that thoughtful men hankered to overcome the change by something permanent, immutable and absolute. The intense search for salvation which possessed the more enlightened minds may have, thus, sprung from a deep-rooted fear of insecurity and a profound sense of instability. 'It is this fact that may suggest the social context of the growth of the pessimistic world-view, of the quest for *mokṣa*, of the search for the single principle or essence which is fundamental and ultimate, and

union with which is believed to give permanence in the midst of change.'[98] There is evidence to show that there were people fearful of the future in this period of fleeting change, although, from the point of view of history, it appears as a period of remarkable advance on all fronts. The attitude of social despair and pessimism is expressed by the Jaina canon *Uttarājjhayana*: 'Happy we are, happy live we who call nothing our own; when Mithilā is on fire, nothing is burnt that belongs to me.' However, as mentioned above, the question of relationship between religion and social change has always been an intriguing problem. It is commonplace to view both religion and social structure, or at least one of the two, in static terms. For example, there has been a rather widespread notion, especially among the faithful adherents, that religion stands for something trans-historical, permanent and eternal in the midst of transient and capricious social structure. Religious rhetoric would, therefore, assert that religion alone gives certainty and inner security to life, providing a firm foundation for an ever-changing society. The history of religions clearly demonstrates that every religion has grown and undergone transformations and changes, progressive or revolutionary, due to its inner dynamics as much as to the influence of environmental factors. Conversely speaking, every religion has exerted a greater or lesser degree of influence on various aspects of social and cultural life, not only on the cohesion of social groups and cultural patterns, but also on the differentiation, transformation and even disruption of social, economic and political structures and institutions.[99]

Although the main drive of Buddhism was the attainment of equanimity and freedom from suffering for all time, conceived as Nirvāṇa, it should not be thought that it was other-worldly or isolated itself from ordinary human society. Many of the moral and spiritual practices like the *pañca-śīla* or the *brahma-vihāras*, like *maitrī* (friendliness), *karuṇā*

(compassion), *muditā* (joy) and *upekkhā* (indifference towards vice) could not be practised in isolation. The Buddha explicitly eschewed dogmatism concerning the nature of the world and soul, the practice of ceremonies, etc. In the *Assivaccagotta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, Vaccagotta raises ten questions. The Buddha refuses to answer these questions because they neither foster moral growth nor do they lead to *abhijñā* and *saṁbodhi* or Nirvāṇa. The propagation of Buddhism in different areas and lands was always carried in the humane way, through persuasion and acceptance. There was never recourse to force, violence, persecution or offering of non-religious inducements. Buddhism was able to make an appeal to most of the social classes. 'It responded to the needs of a wide and important section of the Indian population. We can infer the character of the most important patrons of early Buddhism from the *Pāli* texts themselves. Among the lay supporters of the new sect and its teacher, referred to in the canon, are a number of kings and chiefs, and a few members of the poorer classes of the community, such as, peasants and small craftsmen; but by far the greatest number of such patrons are members of the rising middle class of merchants and craftsmen of the better and more highly skilled sort. This also, is largely true of Jainism. In fact, many followers of both Buddhist and Jaina doctrines and monastic communities were people of wealth and prosperity and their motive for supporting these anti-sacrificial faiths might have been the protection of their wealth from arbitrary appropriation and unproductive waste in sacrifices. Like the Buddhist *saṅgha* the Jaina monastery also drew their monks and lay supporters from all social ranks, and both institutions conscientiously maintained close links with the societies about them. Probably, one reason for the success of Jainism in surviving as a popular religion in India, with significant following among merchants and artisans, was that the laity followed the practice of periodic retreats in

the monasteries where they lived as monks. And the influence was reciprocal. Monks and nuns get their livelihood from the pious donations of lay-followers and then are, therefore, materially dependent upon them. The bond between the clergy and the laymen in Jainism is very close. The Jaina clerics produced some fifty texts on conduct proper to a Jaina lay person (*śrāvakācāra*).

There is a popular notion that the Buddha was a social revolutionary who preached a crusade against caste and that Buddhism is a casteless religion.[100] The fact of the matter is that there was strictly no caste or caste observance in the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Buddha is very categorical in stating that in the order all castes lose their distinctions and become one, just as the rivers lose their individual distinctions after falling into the great ocean (*mahāsamudda*).[101] The Buddha was prepared to accept differences between man and man, but not based on heredity. For this he relied on the criterion of wisdom, deeds and virtue. The Buddhist protest against caste system, whatever, its limitations, was not revolutionary in a different way also. It was not the Buddha alone who disapproved of the caste hierarchy based on birth, but the idea was shared by many other contemporary religious teachers and sects. For example, the Jaina point of view on the issue of caste can be gleaned from an interesting incident referred to in the *Uttarājjhayan*, where a Brāhmaṇa turned monk instructs the Brāhmaṇas about what is a true sacrifice and who is a true Brāhmaṇa. One becomes a *Śramaṇa* by equanimity, a Brāhmaṇa by chastity, a *muni* by knowledge and a *tāpasa* by penance. By one's actions one beomes a Brāhmaṇa, or Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya or a Śūdra.[102] Thus, contrary to the popular notion that the Buddha was a crusading social reformer, leading the cause of common man against the established order of the day, there is no evidence to show that he tried, directly at anytime, to change the society. He appears to have taken for granted the various forms of socio-

political order existing at the time. What he really stressed all through his teachings was the cardinal value of the path in which right conduct (*śīla*) and meditation were regarded as prerequisites for spiritual insight, knowledge and liberation. It was his conviction that the transformation of 'society,' comprising all living beings, would be possible only as a by-product of the religious transformation of individual beings in this world (*loka*).[103] While it is evident that the Buddha, being essentially a spiritual and ethical teacher, did not claim to be a champion of the downtrodden, but it is also true that he did foster, indirectly, the cause of social cohesiveness and egalitarianism by his outspoken condemnation of the Brāhmaṇical and Kṣatriya claims to superiority. In conformity with its basic nature, Buddhism could not have directly initiated a social revolution for then it would have projected itself into the social and economic prblems of the times.

The monks and nuns were prohibited from engaging into any kind of economic activity, and possession of property by them was forbidden. However, for the lay-followers of both Buddhism and Jainism, who remained in the world, no restrictions on their economic activities were imposed. In fact, acquisition of wealth was regarded as a laudable activity and its waste was considered deplorable. After having served one's own necessities, wealth should be spent for religious ends, such as, on monks and monasteries and in the service of one's needful neighbours. People by now possessed a better and an advanced agricultural knowledge[104] and had come to know about the use of iron-ploughshare.[105] The *Cullavagga* gives an elaborate account of the busy life of farmers who had always to keep vigilance over the crops lying in their fields.[106] People engaged in the pursuit of trade, business and industrial occupations were getting proper rewards, not only in terms of accumulation of wealth, but also in the increase and recognition of their

social status. These traders and businessmen are described in the *Vinaya* texts as '*gahapatis*,' '*seṭṭhis* and *seṭṭhiputtas*.[107] The *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* sources provide abundant indication of a busy commercial activity in the country. There is mention of caravans going from Rājagṛha to south (*paṭiyālokam*).[108] Routes, important from the trade point of view, were known as *vaṇikapathas*.[109] It seems that all major urban centres were linked by roads, and the rivers interrupting the passage were crossed over by boats.[110] References to Bharukaccha[111] and Tambapaṇṇidīpa,[112] probably, point to the navigational voyages of the traders. The *Jātakas* contain detailed references to the trade of India with Sri Lanka.[113] The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya also offers explicit references to the expansion of trade and commerce with the countries of Eastern and Western Asia.[114] Corporate bodies and trade organisations, such as, *saṁgha*, *gaṇa*, *seṇi* and *pūga* had also come into existence.[115] Social and economic changes, that were taking place, paved the way for social mobility. Governance and administrative jobs, which were an exclusive preserve of the Kṣatriyas, were now thrown open to the people of other *varṇas*, even foreigners. The Nandas were Śūdras and the origin of the Mauryas is still under dispute. In the *Pāli* texts we have numerous examples of the Brāhmaṇas pursuing professions like tillage, cow-herding, goat-keeping, hunting, carpentry, weaving, caravan-guarding, archery, carriage-driving, snake-charming, etc. and no reflection was passed on them for doing so. However, Buddhism did not approve of vocations which involved killing of living beings. The ephemeral nature of earthly life and happiness, contrasted with lasting value of the Buddhist way-faring, rendered economic goals appear insignificant in the eyes of the faithful.

As regards the political order, the highest principle, advocated by both Buddhism and Jainism, is that of the conservation of peace and the abolition of war. They

advocated a pacifistic approach in polity as well, as they did in the case of society and economy. Their aim was to protect the needy and maintain tranquility in the society. Thus, although political imperialism based on coercion is an open repudiation of the Buddhist and Jaina emphasis on non-violence, compassion and pacifism, and although their own orders were organised on republican principles, both the movements furthered, of course indirectly, the cause of political expansion. While there can be no denying the fact, that the elements of idealism, pessimism and asceticism dominate the metaphysics and ethics of Buddhism, so far as the problem of individual redemption from sin and sorrow is concerned, yet the political philosophy of the *Pāli Tripiṭaka* is, in no way, anti-terrestrial. The thirtieth *sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, entitled *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* inculcates the similarity between the ideal of Buddhahood and the ideal of *cakkavattī* (*cakravartin*). It says that to a *mahāpuruṣa* (the great being) endowed with thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* (marks), only two careers are open. If he forsakes the worldly life, he becomes an Arhat, a *samyakasambuddha.* But if he opts for the worldly life, he becomes a *cakravartin* (sole sovereign).[116] Thus, a *cakravartin* is the temporal counterpart of a Buddha, not only in his outward physical form, having thirty-two characteristic marks and the incidents of his birth and death etc. but also in their unique role as universal benefactors. According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya,* the fully enlightened Tahtāgata (Buddha) and the *cakkavattī* are two persons who are born for the happiness of many folk, and who are both extraordinary.[117] In the *Cakkavattīsīhanāda Sutta* the old sole sovereigns, including Dalhanemi, the first of the hoary past, are mentioned. It is in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,*[118] that the ideal of *cakravartin* is formulated for the first time, which delineates him to be a sole sovereign (*sārvabhauma*), that is,' all encompassing, possessed of all the earth, possessed of all life, from one end up to the further side of the earth

bounded by the ocean.' However, in its practical operation it was conceived as being confined to upper India. But the missionary movement of the Buddha succeeded in giving an expanded territorial connotation to this term. Just as the liberal teachings and ethical ideals of Zoroaster aided the political career of the Achaemenian empire, the political teachings of early Buddhism also sponsored the concept of *cakkavattī* (*cakravartin*).[119] The indirect incentive that Buddhism gave to monarchichal imperialism was only through suggesting the view that just as there was an expansive missionary movement, so also, there could be an expansive political movement.

We have sketched above the poltical horizon of India during the fifth-fourth centuries BC, which was rent with violent clashes and conflicts between the contending powers, monarchical, as well as, republican. These contests led to the emergence of Magadha as the paramount power in a large part of north-east India in Buddha's own life time. Early Buddhism also succeeded in extending its area of missionary operations almost in the same region. This crossing of the inter-*janapada* and inter-*gaṇa* lines may have provided a considerable field of action to the Buddhist preachers. It is, therefore, possible that the expansion of religious theatre of action might have aided the expansion of the territorial field of action for the Magadhan emperors also.[120] That political repurcussions did issue from the Buddhist movement is best illustrated by an episode described in *Parinibbāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Ajātaśatru, while planning to attack the Vajjians, sent his Brāhmaṇa minister Vassakāra with instructions to inform the Buddha of his intentions. Buddha responded by offering his considered view about the desired qualities of a citizen of the republican state. These comprise the virtues of public spirit (evinced by the attendance of the members of the popular assembly and their mutual harmony), a wise conservatism (illustrated

by loyalty to the ancient traditions), moral rectitude and discipline (exemplified by respect for the elders, and non-violence towards women of other clans), and piety (shown by respect for shrines and protection of the saints).[121] While underlining mutual harmony, the golden key to the success of a republic, the Buddha also makes it evident that the bane of republican system lies in its proneness to internal dissensions. Taking this cue, the shrewd minister of Ajātaśatru excused himself hurriedly to report back to the monarch who acted upon it to vanquish the most formidable confederacy of Indian history. This is an example of how such a significant political consequence could follow from an objective observation of the Buddha, which shows that he was vitally interested in social cohesion and co-operation and in the act of reconciling people who stood divided.

It was the liberalism and humanism of the ascetic movements, led by teachers like the Buddha and Mahāvīra, which contributed to the promotion of a sense of 'national' feeling among the Indians. Their influence went far beyond the spheres of religion and philosophy and paved the way for the disruption of the Vedic social order by loosening the stranglehold of caste system and the dominance of the Brāhmaṇas. As a result, the unnecessary rites and rituals, as well as superstitions gave way to social and political understanding. Eastern India, and more particularly the region of Magadha, became the springboard of new movements in the intellectual and socio-political life of India. The earliest mention of Magadha is found in the *Atharva Veda*,[122] where it has been said that Magadha was inhabited by the people of low reputation. Later Vedic texts demonstrate a clear antipathy to the people of Magadha. They were supposed to be of mixed origin.[123] There seems to have been immigrations in Magadha from various sources much before the advent of the Aryans. The heretical movements like the Ājīvikas, Jainas and the Buddhists found

their ground ready in this part of India. With the emergent heretical sects in the land of the *vrātya* culture, there was also in progress a movement towards imperialist expansion under the hegemony of Magadha and an experiment in democratic government among the Licchavis, Vajjis, Mallas, Śākyas and so on. In fact, the new age that was dawning demanded new forms of political organisation and revaluation of norms of social behaviour and formulation of new social goals. Analysing the contribution of Buddhism, E.B.Havell remarks that 'in social and political sphere Buddhism has played the same role in cultivating a national spirit in India which Christianity did in 7th century to integrate the diversified elements of Saxon Hierarchy'.

The change in the intellectual and social climate, which had been in progress for the last few centuries, ushered in a virtual revolution in the political life of the country when a powerful empire of Mahāpadma Nanda, a Śūdra or a person of 'unknown lineage (*ajñāta-kula*),' came to be established. The Nanda dynasty was followed by the mighty Mauryas, again of uncertain origin, whose contribution to the cause of Indian political unity and social harmony is unparalled in its annals. The Mauryas established the most extensive empire in Indian history extending from the borders of Iran to Śravaṇa Belgolā in Karnataka and from Kathiawar to the borders of Kamarupa. The Mauryan empire, under Chandragupta and Aśoka, was not just the largest and the strongest ever founded in the country, including as it did, the crucial north-western territories of Aria, Arachosia, Paropanisadae and Gedrosia (i.e. Heart, Kandahar, Kabul and Baluchistan), but it was also the world's first 'secular welfare state', rooted in the toleration of all faiths, the sanctity of all life, and the promotion of amity and peace for all humanity. The Buddhist and Jaina movements espoused and put before the contemporary society ideals, such as, wisdom, reason, moderation, harmony, righteousness,

charity and compasion. The society, in their view, was of a 'universal' as distinguished from a tribal society; it was the community of the righteous anywhere and everywhere unencumbered by rules of tribal, regional or caste affiliations. The *dhamma* had, thus, become both a spiritual and social force. It became an instrument dedicated to the creation of certain values like *samatā*, which the Mauryan emperor Aśoka seeks to translate into action in his principles of *daṇḍasamatā* and *vyavahārasamatā*. As is well-known, the Mauryan empire was a centralised bureaucracy, covering nearly the whole of the sub-continent. However, in the absence of rapid transport and quick communication, the emperor, whatsoever the intensity of his resolve for benevolence and righteousness, he could not but have seemed remote and detached from the great majority of his peoples. Administered by civil servants, appointed from the centre, the Mauryan state must have appeared impersonal and almost superhuman to people who remembered traditions of smaller realms, ruled by local monarchs. For such an empire, the creed of Buddhism seems quite appropriate, for the state would, thus, be, in a sense, the microcosm of universal order, controlled not by arbitrary gods, but by a single immutable principle.[124]

NOTES

1. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Brahmajāla* and *Sāmaññaphala Suttas*; *Sūyagadaṅga*, 1.12.1; S.K.Belvalkar in *Gopal Basu Mallik Memorial Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 84; B.M. Barua, *A History of Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, pp. 188 ff., J.C.Jain. *Life in Ancient India as depicted in Jaina Canon and Commentaries*, pp. 287 ff; N.N.Bhattacharya, *Jain Philosophy: Historical Outline*, p. 89. F. Otto Schrader calls it an age seething with speculative ferment and S.Stevenson as times 'ripe for revolt.'
2. *Cambridge Ancient History*, III, p. 499.
3. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III, 8,10; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1,2,7-11; *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad*, 11, 5. In the view of the Upaniṣadic thinkers the sacrifices may have some validity but they cannot save man from death.
4. The Buddhist texts refer to Ājīvika, Nirgrantha, Muṇḍa Śrāvaka, Jaṭilaka,

Parivrājaka, Māgaṇḍika, Traidaṇḍika, Aviruddhaka, Devadharmika and so on.

5. The Jaina text *Niśītha Cūrṇi* mentions five classes of the Samanas: (i) Nigganṭha Sādhu or Khamana, (ii) Sakka, (iii) Tavasa, (iv) Gerua (Parivrājaka) (v) Ājīviya.
6. G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Vol.I, Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Forms in Ancient India, p. 71; see also, Haripada Chakraborti, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 7; Padmanabh S.Jaini, *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies*, p. 48.
7. Cf. V.S. Pathak, Preface in S.R. Goyal, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, pp. xiii-xxiii; Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Cultur*e, pp. 160 ff.
8. G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, Vol. I, pp.61ff.; *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 258ff.; *Vaidika Sanskriti*, pp. 470–71; S.N. Dube, 'Heterodox Movements in India in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, General Editor, D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Vol.I Pt 2, Life, Thought and Culture in India (from c. 600 BC to c. AD 300), ed. G.C. Pande, pp. 469 ff. Sagar Mal Jain, Origin and Development of Jainism up to 3rd century AD in *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, General Editor, D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Vol I Pt 2 Life, Thought and Culture in India (from c 600. BC to c. AD 300), ed. G.C. Pande, pp. 683 ff; *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol. 2, pp. 351–52.
9. Cf. *Isibhāsiyāim Suttaim.*
10. *Vedapramāṇyaṁ kasyacitkartṛvādaḥ*
    snane dharmecchā jātivādāvalepaḥ
    santāpāraṁbaḥ pāpahānāya ceti
    dhvastaprajñānāṁ pañcalingani jāḍye
11. IV. 4.60: '*astināstidiṣṭam matiḥ*,' quoted G.C. Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition: Its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, p.1., cf. K.L. Shrimali, *The Age of Iron and the Religious Revolution,* pp. 111 ff.
12. '*Divividho hi Vedokto dharmaḥ pravṛtti lakṣaṇo nivṛtti lakṣṇāḥ cha*', *Gītā*, '*Sankara's Commentary*, p. 1.
13. Cf. Padmanabh S.Jaini, 'Śramaṇas: Their Conflict with Brāhmaṇical Society', Chapter II in *Chapters in Indian Civilization*, I, ed., W.Joseph Elder; G.C.Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 325ff.; V.S.Pathak, Preface in S.R.Goyal, *A History of Indian Buddhism,* pp. xiii-xxiii.
14. The Collected Works of Swami Vivekananda, IV.135, V.309.
15. H. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, II, Introduction, p.xxvii.
16. *Buddhist India*, pp. 163-4.
17. *Buddha, His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, trans. from German by Willam Hoey, p. 53.
18. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, p. 34.
19. *A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy*, pp. 409, 416-7.

20. Cf. *Collected Works*, IV, p. 3.
21. Cf. *The Creative Period of Indian Philosophy*; R.D. Ranade, *Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*, p. 6.
22. H. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, I, p. xxxii; cf. H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 73; M. Maxmuller, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 53.
23. G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 322–26; S. Dutt, *Buddha and Five After Centuries*, pp. 46–52; Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I., p. 237.
24. For recent discussions on the subject see, Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Collected papers on Buddhist Studies*, pp. 48 ff; Paul Hrsch, *Buddhismus und Upanishaden*, *Pratidanam*, pp. 462–77; L.M. Joshi, *Discerning the Buddha*, pp. 28 ff., G.C.Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, pp. 1–22; V.S. Pathak, *loc.cit.*, Bhagchandra, Jain, 'Antiquity of the Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. 1.
25. *Buddha*, p. 54.
26. Cf. G.C. Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 4-22.
27. Cf. R.C. Majumdar *et al*, ed. *Vedic Age*, pp. 145ff. R.P. Chanda, *Indo-Aryan Races,* Chap.II; G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, pp. 251 ff; Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell, p. 281; L.M. Joshi, *Discerning the Buddha*, pp. x ff; G.S.P. Misra, *Development of Buddhist Ethics*, pp. 1ff.
28. C.F. Koppen, *Die Religion des Buddha.*
29. H. Oldenberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 219 ff.
30. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India,* pp. 27 ff. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol.I, p. 176.
31. D.D. Kosambi, *Introduction to the Study of Indian History;* 309–18; *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, pp. 96 ff.
32. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata,* pp. 486 ff.
33. R.S. Sharma, *Das Kapital Centenary Volume,*eds. M. Sen and M.B. Rao, pp. 62–64; '*Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*', pp. 96–99.
34. Romila Thapar, 'Ethics, Religion and Social, Protest in the First Millennium BC in Northern India' in *Ancient Indian Social History,* pp. 40-62.
35. For a critique of these views see G.C. Pande, 'Social Origins of Buddhism', in *Bodhi-Rashmi;* pp. 5-7 *Foundations of Indian Culture,* Vol. I, pp. 61–62.
36. Rakesh Tiwari, 'Antiquity of Iron in South-Eastern Uttar Pradesh', *Bharati,* Bulletin of the Department of AIHC & Archaeology, B.H.U. Varanasi, Vol. 25 (Pts I & II 1998-1999) pp. 124 ff; Cf. N.R. Banerjee, *The Iron Age in India*, pp. 4 ff.
37. V.K. Thakur, 'Origin and Growth of Buddhism in India', *The Mahabodhi,* Vol. 85, Nos. 2-3, pp. 37–41.

38. D.K. Chakrabarti, *Indian Studies: Past and Present.*
39. Walter A. Fairservis, *The Roots of Ancient India* pp. 378-81; cf. A.L.Basham, ed. *Cultural History of India*, pp. 16-17.
40. V.K. Thakur, *Urbanisation in Ancient India*, pp. 72 ff.
41. Cf. R.H. Rawney, *Religion and Rise of Capitalism*, K.Marx, *Capital* I, p. 51; *JBBRAS*, 1951, pp. 192–93.
42. G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 315.
43. *Mahāvagga,* pp. 77, 79.
44. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India,* p. 32.
45. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 6.2.1-3; *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*, 5.3.1-6
46. *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad*, 4.2.
47. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* 5.11.1-7.
48. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 3.1.1.
49. *Ibid,* 6.2.8.
50. *Bhagavadgītā,* IV. 1-2.
51. *Śramaṇa* in *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (11.7.) refers to a particular class of sages.
52. V.S. Agrawal, *India as Known to Pāṇini,* p. 383 f.
53. Mc Crindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian,* p. 65.
54. R.E. XIII.
55. Franz L. Kielhorn, *Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali,* Vol. I. p. 476.
56. *Siddhahema,* III. 1. 141, quoted Padmanabh S. Jaini, *Collected Papers on Buddhist Studies,* p. 49.
57. Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India,* ed. Joseph Campbell, p. 281. H.Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism,* p. 73; Maxmuller, *Hibbert Lectures,* p. 35; H.Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras,* I, pp. XXIV-XXXII; L.M. Joshi, *Discerning the Buddha,* p. 44.
58. Cf. G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism,* pp. 6 ff.; *Śramaṇa Tradition,* pp. 4-5; A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India,* p. 23.
59. Cf. S.R. Goyal, *A History of Indian Buddhism,* pp. 36–7.
60. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra,* Vol. II, p. 419.
61. A.P. Karmakar, *The Religions of India,* Vol. I. The Vrātya or Dravidian Systems, Preface, p. vi.
62. *Atharaveda-Vrātya Khaṇḍa.*
63. II. 37.13-7; *SBE,* II. pp 118-9.
64. I. 8.
65. Quoted A.P. Karmarkar, *op.cit.* p. 19.
66. *Anuśāsana Parva,* 83.10.
67. Böthlingk and Roth, *St. Petersberg Lexicon,* VI. 1503.
68. Cf. S. Singh, *Evolution of the Smriti Law,* p. 138; A.P. Karmarkar, *op.cit,* pp. 18 ff.
69. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra,* Vol. II, Pt. 2, pp.942-6.
69. Cf. G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism,* pp. 31 ff; *Śramaṇa*

Tradition, pp. 1ff; L.M. Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India;* G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya,* pp. 35 ff.; A.L. Basham, 'The Background to the Rise of Buddhism,' *Studies in History of Buddhism,* ed. A.K. Narain, pp. 14 ff.; B.C. Jain, 'Antiquity of Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism,* XV No. 1, pp. 3 ff; H.Chakraborti, *op.cit.;* p. 1.

70. G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya,* pp. 49-50; S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism,* pp. 14 ff.
71. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp. 41 ff.; Cf. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha,* Vol. I. pp. 65–95.
72. O. Schrader has utilised the Jaina sources fully in discussing these views in his valuable work, *Uber den Stand der Indischen Philoosophie zur Zeit Mahaviras und Buddhas.*
73. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India,* pp. 110–11; Cf. K.N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge,* pp. 207–8; Cf. G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism,* pp. 330–31.
74. Cf. B.M. Barua, *op. cit.,* Chapter XIII, ff; G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism,* pp. 327 ff; *Bauddha Dharma ke Vikasa ka Itihasa,* pp. 31–40; Ratilal Mehta, *Pre-Buddhist India,* pp. 332 ff.; N. Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism,* Vol I. pp, 34ff; see also B.C. Law, *Historical Gleanings,* pp. 21 ff, *Buddhistic Studies,* pp. 73 ff.; K.N. Jayatilleke, *op.cit.,* Chapters II-III.
75. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp. 13-16.
76. *Ibid.,* I. pp. 17-21.
77. *Ibid.,* I, pp. 21–23.
78. *Ibid.,* I, p. 27.
79. Cf. *Ibid.,* I. p. 28.
80. *Ibid.,* I. p. 29.
81. Cf. *Ibid.,* I. pp. 30–32.
82. *Ibid.,* I. pp. 32–34.
83. *Ibid,* I, pp. 23–66; Cf. N. Dutta, *Early Monastic Buddhism,* Vol. I, p. 43n.
84. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp. 46-8; *Aṅguttara Nikāya,* I, pp. 34, 267; *Majjhima Nikāya,* I, pp. 248, 292, 308; See also A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ājīvikas,* pp 123–27.
85. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp.45–46; *Majjhima Nikāya,* I, pp.248, 308.
86. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp. 49–59; *Majjhima Nikāya,* I, pp. 248, 308.
87. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp. 50–51.
88. *Ibid.,* I, pp. 48–52.
89. A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ājīvikas,* pp.134–41.
90. *Mahāvagga,* pp. 33–34.
91. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I. pp. 98 ff.
92. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *P.H.A.I,* p. 142.
93. *Nāpitadāsa, Āvaśyaka Sūtra,* p. 690.
94. The Jaina authors also say that the Nanda territory was *'āsamudrāpi śriyaḥ.'*

95. S. Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism,* p. 3.
96. Cf. K.V.R. Aiyangar, *Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity,* p. 62; K.P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity,* pp. 195 ff; A.S. Altekar, *State and Government in Ancient India,* pp. 3 ff. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka,* pp. 232. ff.
97. A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History,* Vol. III, pp. 270 ff.
98. A.L. Basham, 'The Background to the Rise of Buddhism' *Studies in the History of Buddhism,* ed. A.K. Narain p. 15.
99. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion,* pp.116-17.
100. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery of India,* p. 141; M.N. Roy, *From Savagery to Civilization,* p. 9; B.R. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma,* pp. 301-6; Pratap Chandra, 'Buddhism as Instrument of Social Change' *Studies in Religion and Change'* ed. Madhu Sen, pp. 81-92; P.L. Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism,* Chap. IV.
101. *Cullavagga,* p. 354.
102. H.Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras,* II, pp. 130 ff.
103. Joseph M. Kitagawa, 'Buddhism and Social Change,' *Festschrift for Walpole Rahula,* eds. Somaratna Balasooriya *et.al,* p. 87.
104. Cf. R.S. Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formation in Ancient India,* pp. 96-99.
105. Cf. D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancietn India in Historical Outline,* pp. 96 ff.; V.S. Agarwal, *India as known to Pāṇini,* p. 198.
106. *Cullavagga,* p. 279 ff.
107. G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya,* pp. 200-61.
108. *Pācittiya,* p. 216.
109. *Mahāvagga,* p. 244.
110. *Pācittiya,* p. 304.
111. *Pārājika,* p. 49.
112. *Cullavagga,* p. 149.
113. Cf. *Jātaka,* 3.126-27, 267, 415-7, 6-34.
114. Cf. *Arthaśāstra,* 2.4, 7.12.
115. R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India,* p. 80.
116. *'Rājā cakkavavattī dhammiko dhamma-rāja cāturanto vijitvā.. So imaṁ pathavīṁ sāgara-pariyantaṁ adaṇḍena asatthena dhammena abhivijīya ajjhāvasati,' cf. Dīgha Nikāya,* I, p. 77, II. 113.
117. U.N.Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Idea*s, p. 79.
118. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,* VIII, 15: *Pṛthivyāi samudraparyantāya ekarāṭa.*
119. V.P. Varma, *Early Buddhism and its Origins,* pp. 349-50; The idea is also known to the *Jātakas,* IV, pp. 309 G.80, 310 G.85, 476 G.1670.
120. V.P. Varma, *op.cit.*352.
121. U.N. Ghoshal, *op.cit.,* p. 76.
122. *Atharva Veda,* V. 22.14.
123. *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra,* 1.1.29.
124. A.L. Basham, 'The Background to the Rise of Buddhism,' *Studies in the History of Buddhism,* ed. A.K. Narain, pp. 18–19.

IV

IMPERIAL UNIFICATION AND WIDER HORIZONS

The emergence of the Mauryas on the political scene of Magadha (c.324–185 BC) introduces to us one of the richest and most fruitful epochs of the history of India.[1] The overthrow of the Achaemenian empire of Persia by Alexander, his campaigns and conquests in the north-west of India and his early death (323 BC) at Babylon, followed by the partition of his extensive empire into large territorial monarchies, formed a chain of events that, in one way or the other, prepared ground for the extension of the Mauryan empire in the north-west, and fixed the political map of the regions with which that empire was to maintain a close contact for more than a century. Notwithstanding the fact that the importance of Alexander's campaigns in India had been both over-estimated,[2] as well as under-estimated, there can be no two opinions that what remained of the foreign occupation, after his retreat from India and his death in 323 BC, was wiped out in the war of liberation waged by Chandragupta Maurya. The career of Chandragupta, the first historical emperor of India and the founder of its biggest ever imperial dynasty, sheds lustre on its history, for to him belongs the credit, not only of liberating the homeland from the Macedonian occupation, but also of securing, for the first time, the political unification of the greater part of India under one sceptre. The India he ruled was an extended India, greater than even the British India of modern times. It was a remarkable feat, especially when

we are made to believe that Chandragupta did not inherit a throne but was born as a commoner. His rise to greatness is, indeed, a romance of history. The fact of Chandragupta's humble origin, as noted by Justin,[3] who epitomises the account of Pompeius Trogus, and may have had access to earlier sources, is also supported by the Buddhist *Pāli* traditions, which describe the circumstances of the first meeting between Chāṇakya and Chandragupta. It proved to be a fateful meeting fraught with immense consequences not only in their own lives, individually, but for the history of the country as a whole. According to the Buddhist sources, Chāṇakya found Chandragupta in a village as the adopted son of a cowherd, from whom, noticing in the boy some certain sign of future greatness, he bought him by paying on the spot 1000 *kārṣāpaṇas*. He took the boy with him to his native city of Takṣaśilā, the then most renowned centre of learning in India, and had him educated there for a period of seven or eight years in the humanities and the practical arts and crafts (*śilpa*), including the military arts.[4] The above information finds support in Plutarch's remark that Chandragupta, as a youth, had met Alexander during his campaigns in the Punjab.[5] This meeting could be possible only if we assume that Chandragupta was already living in that region. The precise role of Chāṇakya in the coronation of Chandragupta on the Magadhan throne is difficult to delineate, but there is little reason to doubt the truth of the main story in its outline: an unusually valiant Kṣatriya warrior and a Brāhmaṇa statesman of great learning and resourcefulness joined to bring about the downfall of an avaricious dynasty of hated rulers (Nandas), and establish a new empire which made the good of the people the object of its chief concern; they freed the land from the foreign invader and from internal tyranny and established a state which, in due course, embraced practically the whole of India; together they organised one of the most powerful

and efficient bureaucracies known to the history of the world. Kṣatra (*Imperium*) and Brahma (*Sacredotium*) came together and engaged in the most fruitful cooperation for the great good of the land and the people. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya (Chāṇakya) holds a place in the literature of Indian polity corresponding to that of the Mauryan empire in Indian history.

Chandragupta had to wage a fierce struggle against the powerful Nanda ruler of Magadha and also against the Greek garrisons left in India by Alexander. In Indian and classical accounts there are many interesting details regarding the various stages of the struggle led by Chandragupta to gain power, although the chronology of struggle is still a subject of great controversy among the historians.[6] It is argued that Chandragupta drove away the Greeks first, and then conquered Magadha. But there is the counter-view also, which reverses the order of his two conquests.[7] Contrary to the view that Chandragupta drove away the Greeks first, and then conquered Magadha, there is a section of scholars which thinks otherwise. For example, H. Jacobi has pointed out that the *Bauddha-parvatīyavaṁsāvalī* seems to indicate that Parvataka, the ally of Chandragupta was, probably, a king of Nepal.[8] A Maurya-Nepal alliance was likely, since Chandragupta was a scion of the Moriyavaṁsa of Pippalivana, situated close to the Nepal borders. It is not unlikely, therefore, that Chāṇakya and Chandragupta may have recruited their forces from Nepal and the adjoining regions of U.P. and Bihar, whose people have been known for being as efficient soldiers as the sturdy mountaineers of the area of Punjab. It may be noted that, later on, Chandragupta is said to have defeated Seleucus with a force drawn from eastern Hindustan. In support of the above view it is added that Chandragupta could not have embarked upon an offensive against the strong army of the Greeks and Macedonians at that point of time. But as soon as Alexander's

main troops had left India, conditions played into Chandragupta's hands. The classical sources also inform us, that India after the death of Alexander had shaken, as it were, the yoke of servitude from its neck and put his governors to death. The author of this liberation was Sandrocottus (Chandragupta).[9]

The Buddhist and Jaina sources, on the other hand, tell us that Chandragupta's first attempt to overthrow the Nandas was unsuccessful, since he had not yet secured his rear.[10] The *Mahāvaṁsa Tīkā* informs us, that on the completion of Chandragupta's education at Takṣaśilā, both Chāṇakya and Chandragupta set out for collecting recruits (*balaṁ saṁghaṇhitvā*) from different places (*tato tato balaṁ sannipātetvā*). Chāṇakya placed the army under the command of Chandragupta (*mahābalakāyaṁ sangahetvā taṁ tass paṭipādesi*). It was from the Punjab, thus, that nucleus of Chandragupta's army was recruited.[11] Apparently, an army of liberation was organised out of the lawless and violent elements of society, whom Justin calls 'robbers'. The *Arthaśāstra* mentions, as the sources of recruitment of the army, (a) the *choras* or *pratirodhakas* of the day, the robbers and outlaws, (b) the *chora-gaṇas*, organised gangs of brigands, (c) the *mleccha* tribes like the Kirāta highlanders (d) the *āṭvikas*, the foresters and (e) the warrior clans called *śastropajīvīśrenīs* and it counts the soldiery recruited form these clans as the most heroic (*pravīra*).[12] These robbers whom Chāṇakya and Chandragupta considered fit for recruitment in the army may have been, as pointed out by McCrindle, the republican peoples of the Punjab, who had fought heroically to resist Alexander's invasion.[13] They were the *araṭṭās* or *arāsṭrakas*, i.e., kingless peoples, not living under a *rāṣtra* or state, of which the normal type was the kingship. The *Dharmasūtra* of Baudhāyana (c.400 BC) describes the Punjab as the country of *araṭṭās*.[14] The *Mahābhārata* calls them *pañcanadas*, i.e. 'natives of the land

of fire rivers'[15], and also *vāhīkas*, 'people of the land of rivers', comprising the Prasthalas, Madras, Gandhāras, Khaśas, Vasātis, Sindhus and Sauvīras. Before Chandragupta's time, these republican people were known to Pāṇini as *āyudhajīvīsaṅgha*s.[16]

Without subscribing to the view that Chandragupta first liberated the north-west from the Greek occupation and then conquered Magadha, F.W.Thomas, nevertheless holds that 'there exists a Buddhist and Jaina story which makes Chandragupta's second attempt begin with the frontiers. Further, a conquest of the Punjab by Chandragupta with forces from eastern Hindustan has little inherent plausibility: before the British power the movement had been consistently in the opposite direction.'[17] F.W. Thomas' observation about the consistency of movement from the opposite direction before the establishment of British power may be true regarding external intrusions, but it does not seem to be tenable with regard to internal movements. The commonly accepted theory of Aryan invasion in India from across the north-western borders is being challenged in the light of new evidences.[18] Another example, which does not fit into the aforesaid scheme of Thomas, lies in the heroic expedition of king Chandra of the Meharauli Pillar Inscription, who having crossed the seven mouths of the Sindhu (river Indus) vanquished Vāhlīkas in the battle. So, once again, the movement is from the east and north-east to the west and the north-west. Similarly, in later times Kandahar remained, for a long time, the bone of contention between India and Iran,[19] so much so, that it was captured by the Persian Sultan Hussain Mirza in 1558, i.e., the early period of Akbar's reign and remained under the Safavi occupation for as long as thirty-six years. It was regained, though without a battle, as late as 1595, that is, only after Akbar had fully consolidated his position within the country. What is important, however, about the Mughal example is

that, after the establishment of their rule in India, all their movements to defend the north-west frontiers, whether in the time of Akbar or Jahangir or Shahjahan, were led in that direction from the interior of the country.

As in the *Mahāvaṁsa* and the *Purāṇas*, so in the *Mudrārākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta, a semi-historical play, the chief part in capturing the Magadhan throne is played by Chāṇakya, who having been earlier insulted by the last Nanda king,[20] is bent on taking revenge and brings his protege Chandragupta and to help him Parvataka, a king of the Himālayan region. Following a series of intriguing plots and counter-plots between Chāṇakya, on the one hand, and Rākṣasa, the Nanda minister on the other, the Nanda king disappears from the seen and Chandragupta ascends the throne of Magadha. The *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*[21] and the *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*[22] furnish some similar information. Therein also, the incident of Chāṇakya's humiliation at the hands of the last Nanda king is mentioned, following which an alliance is made with Parvataka. Finally, Pāṭaliputra is captured and the last Nanda king is allowed to go into exile. It is pertinent to note, that in the accounts of classical writers Justin and Plutarch, Chandragupta appears on the scene, for the first time, somewhere in 326–25 BC, when he meets Alexander merely as a 'stripling' and not yet 'called to royalty' and mounts the throne of India 'not long afterwards' by instigating the Indians to overthrow the existing government, or according to another interpretation, soliciting the Indians to support his new sovereignty; thereafter, he prepared to attack Alexander's prefects; the latter were put to death and the yoke of servitude was shaken off from the neck of India 'after Alexander's death' (323 BC).[23] From the details of the account of Plutarch about the meeting of Chandragupta with Alexander, it is interesting to observe that Chandragupta had very low opinion of the Nanda king Agrammes (Ugrasena) and was inclined to support Alexander, urging

the latter to move his army eastwards against the Nanda king who was universally despised.[24] However, Alexander could not, for obvious reasons, undertake a campaign into the heart of India, and was obliged to return west from whence he had come. It was not only Chāṇakya who alone nursed a grievance against the Nanda ruler, but Chandragupta was equally revengeful towards the latter. Justin informs us, that "by his insolent behaviour he had offended Nandrus and was ordered to be put to death when he sought safety by a speedy flight."[25] Chandragupta seems to have thought that Alexander would easily displace him, considering the fact, how he lacked the best defense and protection that a king could have, that is, the love of the people. When Chandragupta found that Alexander was out of the way and unwilling to carry further his conquests and exploit in any way the political situation prevailing in the Nanda empire, he himself thought of undertaking that task. We are expressly told by Justin, that Chandragupta was stimulated to aspire to royalty by an incident that happened immediately after his flight. When he lay down overcome with fatigue and had fallen into deep sleep, a lion of enormous size, approaching him licked with its tongue the sweat which oozed profusely from his body, and when he awoke, quickly took its departure. It was this prodigy which enkindled in him the aspirations for the throne. He collected a band of robbers to achieve his mission. He also instigated people to overthrow the existing government. When he was, thereafter, preparing to attack Alexander's prefects, a wild elephant of monstrous size approached him, and kneeling submissively like a tame elephant, received him on its back and fought vigorously in front of the army. Sandrocottus (Chandragupta), having thus won the throne, was reigning over India, when Seleucus was laying the foundations of his future greatness.[26] The use of term thereafter (*deinde*) by Justin, after "new sovereignty" suggests that the Macedonian

war came sometime after the change of government among Indians. In the *Mudrārākṣasa* also, the complete destruction of Mleccha chieftains and troops follows the dynastic revolution in Magadha.[27] Justin's observation that Chandragupta fought against Alexander's prefects sitting on an elephant shows that he was already a king possessing the *caturāṅga senā*. The theory, therefore, that he conquered the Greek prefects only after ascending the throne of Magadha seems to have sufficient force, and if one subscribes to this viewpoint, then it becomes easier to accept 324 BC[28] as the date of commencement of his rule, a calculation based on the information contained in the *Mahāvaṁsa* and the *Purāṇas*. This date accords with the Buddhist traditions that put his accession 162 years after the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, which, according to the Cantonese reckoning, occurred in 486 BC. Moreover, 324 BC as the date of his accession on the throne of Magadha is not irreconcilable also with the accounts preserved in the Greek and Latin sources.

For the details of the Mauryan struggle against the Nandas, we have to turn to Indian chronicles and story-tellers. There is no contemporary account available. The traditional story has been recounted differently by different authors. One of the earliest of these is to be found in the *Pāli* text *Milindapañho*,[29] which preserves its heroic character as a tale of war between the contending forces of the Nandas and the Mauryas. The struggle against the Nandas proved to be an extremely stubborn one in view of their enormous military strength. In the grim battle that ensued, a million soldiers, ten thousand elephants, a hundred thousand horses and five thousand charioteers are said to have perished. These figures, as given in the *Milindapañho*, seem to be highly exaggerated, but the legend of a fierce and bloody battle lives on, though the details given in the *Purāṇas*, the Sri Lankan chronicles and the *Nītisāra* of Kāmandaka are

characterised by comparative simplicity. They describe how the Nandas were uprooted and the 'earth passed to the Mauryas'. However, the credit for the achievement, for "anointing the glorious youth Chandragupta as king" over the earth (or *Jambu-dvīpa*) is given to the minister Kauṭilya (Chāṇakya or Viṣṇugupta). We have the acccount of the intriguing plots and counter-plots of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, which has a more embellished picture of the struggle. Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya is now definitely the leading actor in the drama. The Nanda king who becomes a victim of his wrath is named Sarvārthasiddhi and his family is, curiously, referred to as of noble birth (*abhijana*).[30] The entire story of the play is woven round the basic objective of the great counsellor who tried to reconcile the unbending minister of the last Nanda king and finally to force him to accept service under Chandragupta. Then alone, Chāṇakya claimed, were the Nandas finally overcome and the empire of the Mauryas established. More new material is added to the tale in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva and *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* of Kṣemendra, the Kashmirian redactions of the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya, the *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*,[31] the *Mahāvaṁsa Tīkā*,[32] and the legend of the Burmese Buddha. The Kashmir tradition moves on different lines altogether, and does not have any points of contact with the *Mudrārākṣasa* story,[33] which is widely supposed to be based on *Bṛhatkathā* or its Kashmirian redactions. Similarly, there are different versions of the story of the initial failure of Chāṇakya and Chandragupta in their campaign against the Nandas, and their ultimate success gained out of the previous experiences. For example, the Buddhist version tells us that the last Nanda king was killed, whereas in the narrative of Hemchandra he is allowed to leave his kingdom.

The demolition of the well-entrenched Nanda rule and the occupation of Pāṭaliputra by Chandragupta was a virtual revolution which rid the Magadhan throne of a dynasty that,

despite its commendable achievements in certain respects, could not endear itself to the subjects. Nandas truly deserve the credit for raising a strong army, carving out a large kingdom by breaking the power and independence of certain local dynasties, penetrating regions of the Deccan,[34] devising methodical system for the collection of taxes and so on. But they lost the golden opportunity both at the home, as well as the external front. On the one hand, they did not enjoy the goodwill of his own people and, on the other, they failed miserably to show any intelligent grasp of policy to follow towards the invaders in the north-west. Thus, Chandragupta was destined to succeed at an early age to an organised, powerful and resourceful empire, which, through many centuries and under a succession of capable rulers, had not only developed a tradition of efficient government, but had claimed and occasionally exercised authority over the entire Indo-Gangetic plain. It may be recalled that the Nanda king was known to the Greeks as the ruler of peoples called the *Gangaridae* and the *Prasii*,[35] i.e., the peoples of the Ganges valley and the Prācyas or easterners.

Having established himself firmly on the throne of Magadha, Chandragupta seems to have started his career of conquest. Liberation of the area of Punjab, which had been occupied by the Macedonians in the recent past should have been high on the priority list of both Chandragupta and Chāṇakya and they would have conceived the grand design of reversing the prevailing conditions which must have filled the people of the region with a deep sense of despair. Kauṭilya condemns foreign rule (*vairājya*) as the worst form of exploitation, where the conqueror, who subdues a country by violence (*parasyācchidya*) never counts it as his own dear country (*naitatmama iti manyamānaḥ*), oppresses it by over taxation and exactions (*karshayati*), and drains it of its wealth (*apavāhayati*).[36] They successfully fomented a popular rising to cast off the yoke of servitude from their necks and slay

their masters. The classical sources, however, are silent about Chāṇakya and refer to Chandragupta as the only hero of the 'First War of Indian Independence'. After the withdrawal of Alexander, the Indian scene seems to have changed rapidly and Chandragupta was largely the key factor in the change. Justin says that it was he, who, on the death of Alexander, liberated India, i.e. Punjab and Sind, from the Macedonian yoke.[37] Alexander's invasion of India does not seem to have been liked by his own followers. The Greek colonies and garrisons established in his new eastern possessions were not feeling at home in an alien environment. Rebellions, both by the Greeks and Indians always threatened his rear. A rumour of his death led three thousand of the colonists to leave for their homeland. Soon afterwards, rebellions do seem to have broken out against the Macedonian rule.

Alexander had divided the territory, he had conquered, into satrapies, leaving part of the lands to Indian rulers too.[38] The first satrapy extending from the Hindukush to the principality of Āmbhi (Takṣaśilā) was given to Philip, the son of Machatas. It is not clear, however, as to how the double rule of the Macedonian satrap and native prince was adjusted. Pithon, the son of Agenor, was made governor of the Sind. The third satrapy extending from the Hydaspes (Jhelum) to Hyphasis (Beas) was given under the charge of Porus. Similarly, the king of Abhisāres or Abhisāra of Kashmir was given the control of local *rājās.* A power struggle between the satrapies began, that must have become intense after the death of Alexander. The arrangement of satrapies itself had certain inherent defects. The Indian empire of Alexander was like a federation of four units 'with head lying at a far distance' and, hence, the controlling and overall authority over them was loose as well. Further, there was every chance of clash between the satrap and the local chiefs under him, while the smaller *rājās* subjugated under

Abhisāra were naturally discontented. There was also the problem of jealousy among the satraps themselves. An Indian chief, named Damaraxus, is reported to have instigated rebellion at Kandahar even while Alexander was at Takṣaśilā. The Greek satrap Nicanor was killed by the Aśvakāyanas while Alexander was campaigning in the Punjab.[39] The Aśvakāyanas, like many others, full of the spirit of revolt as they were, threatened the Greek governor, named Sisikottus (Śaśigupta) an Indian, who had sided with the Greeks, and Alexander had to send him help from his other satrapies. The situation must have worsened after his retreat from India. Philip the satrap of the province between the Hydaspes and the Hindukush was assassinated in 325 BC, i.e. in the lifetime of Alexander.[40] He was unable to meet this direct challenge to his authority and had to put Philip's satrapy under the charge of his Indian governor, the king of Takṣaśilā. This resulted in the strategic areas beyond the Indus and the frontier up to the Kabul Valley and the Hindukush passing into the hands of an Indian ruler.

The movement of liberation of the land of five rivers and the border country from the Macedonians was a long-drawn process. It required two wars to expel the prefects of Alexander and hurl back the battalions of one of the most ambitious and capable of his successors, viz., Seleucus. But the details, especially of the first part of the struggle, i.e., the expulsion of Alexander's prefects are not very clear. We do not know the exact date of his success in the Punjab. Some light on this issue is thrown, however, by the Greek sources. Alexander died in 323 BC and his generals divided his empire among themselves. The first partition of the Macedonian empire was done at Babylon on the day after his death. A second partition took place two years later (321 BC) at Triparadisus in Syria. From the report of the second treaty it is clear that by the time of Triparadisus the Indian situation had changed materially.[41] There no longer was any

foreigner of full satrapal status in India proper and the powers that be in the empire virtually recognised the independence of the Indian kings, convinced of their inability to control them. Diodorus names Porus and Āmbhi (Taxiles) as masters, respectively, along the Indus and the Jhelum rivers. As regards the place of Chandragupta in the decline of the foreign power, while some imagine him as instigating the mutiny which killed Phillip and, thereafter, fighting great war leading to the possible liberation of Sind and the virtual emancipation of the Punjab before 321 BC, others credit him only with 'plunging into the chaos of Punjab after Eudemus' and ruthlessly putting to the sword 'such Macedonian prefects as still held their posts'. We have noted above Justin's description of Chandragupta as the author of India's liberation. That he finally became the master of Sind and Punjab, which the Macedonians had held, is accepted as a fact on all hands, but the mist of obscurity still hangs heavy over the steps leading to this.

From the account of Appian, we learn about the confrontation between Chandragupta and Seleucus[42], a former general of Alexander, who as per the partition of Triparadisus, got Asia including India as his share of the erstwhile Macedonian empire. He informs us, that the Indus formed the boundary between the dominions of Seleucus and Chandragupta before their clash. It is surprising, however, that the classical sources which have so much to say regarding the Indian campaigns of Alexander should be so reticent regarding the details of the famous struggle to which Appian refers. We do not know even the date or total duration of the war. No indication is provided in these sources as to the reason for the hostilities breaking out. Whatever information we have is due to Appian, who says that the fight went on until they (i.e. the Syrian and Indian kings) came to an understanding with each other and contracted a marriage relationship (*kedos*). Further, he adds that some

of the exploits of Seleucus were performed 'before the death of Atigonus (301 BC) and some afterwards.' The 'understanding' or treaty with Chandragupta and 'settlement of affairs in the East' are definitely dated by Justin before Seleucus' return home to prosecute the war with Antigonus.[43] Although Pliny refers to the opening up of India with its numberless nations and cities by the arms of Alexander, Seleucus and Antiochus, but gives no details that might have thrown light on the war with Chandragupta.[44] Seleucus, who was called by the Greeks the Nikator or the victorious, and who was the most successful among the generals of Alexander, after having established himself firmly in Bactria, seems to have crossed the Indus in the hope of repeating the success of his Macedonian master. The situation in India, however, had drastically changed by now. It was no more the weak feudatories of an outlying Persian satrapy that he encountered but the armies of a great empire. Chandragupta, on the other hand, after consolidating his newly gained power, who must have been craving to turn to his own advantage the struggle for supremacy going on between Alexander's heirs, confronted Seleucus with full might. It was natural for Chandragupta to be anxious to win back those regions which Alexander had seized and which had fallen to Seleucus after Alexander's death.

The war itself, between Chandragupta and Seleucus, received very little notice of the classical historians, whereas the final 'understanding' or agreement attracted much greater attention. According to Plutarch, Chandragupta 'made a present to Seleucus of five hundred elephants'.[45] Giving a more detailed information, Strabo says: 'Along the Indus are the Paropanisadae, above whom lies the Paropanisus mountain, then towards the south, the Arachoti; then next, towards the south, the Gedroseni, with the other tribes that occupy the seaboard; and the Indus lies,

latitudinally, along side all these places; and of these places, in part, some that lie along the Indus are held by Indians, although they formerly belonged to the Persians. Alexander took these away from the Arians and established settlements of his own, but Seleucus Nicator gave them to Sandrocottus, upon terms of intermarriage (*epigamia*) and of receiving in exchange five hundred elephants.'[46] Though the classical accounts do not state explicitly that the veteran general was defeated by the Mauryan king, but from the account of the 'understanding' as given by Strabo, it is evident that the expedition of Seleucus proved to be a failure. The royal Macedonian troops, under the command of a distinguished leader, could not dislodge the king of the *Prasii* from the Punjab. On the contrary, the invader had to cede some of the Macedonian possessions on the Indus 'receiving in exchange the comparatively, small recompense of five hundred elephants.' It is difficult to fix the precise extent of the territory given by Seleucus. But from the details offered by Strabo, it seems that it practically included the territory once held by the Persians. Drawing upon the account of Pliny, scholars are of the view that the area ceded, comprised the satrapies of Gedrosia, Arachosia, Paropanisadae and Aria, corresponding to Kabul, Kandahar, Herāt and Makrān. Aśoka,[47] therefore, could justly claim in his second Rock Edict that Antiochus II Theos and other kings were his *pracamta*-s.[48] With the discovery of Aśokan edict at Kandahar,[49] the above surmise seems to have proved right, since neither Aśoka nor his predecessor Bindusāra is credited with any conquest in that direction. Whatever the intensity of initial conflict, followed by a conciliatory treaty, the subsequent relationship between the two monarchs, already cemented by a matrimonial alliance, had been a happy one. Athenaeus informs us, that Sandrocottus dispatched to Seleucus a present of some Indian drugs, and the Greek king, on his part, sent his ambassador Megasthenes

to the court of the Indian king,[50] where he is likely to have lived between, 304 and 299 B.C., the date of Chandragupta's death. The observant envoy, though over-credulous sometimes, collected a great deal of information about India and incorporated it in his work entitled *Indica* of which only fragments have survived. Thus, the most important consequence of this treaty was the establishment of political relations between the kingdom of Syria, which was now the predominant power in Western Asia, and the Mauryan empire. For a fairly long period after this date, there is evidence that these political relations were maintained. The Mauryan empire was acknowledged in the West as one of the great powers and ambassadors, both from Syria and from Egypt, resided at its capital at Pāṭaliputra.

The overthrow of the Nanda rule, the victories in the war of liberation against the Macedonians and the repulse of Seleucus were, probably, not the only political achievements of Chandragupta. Plutarch informs us, that he did not rest on oars of successes in northern India, but employed his vast military force, comprising 600,000 soldiers, to 'overrun and subdue the whole of India'.[51] The detailed facts of this extensive warlike activity are not known, but some glimpses of this can be gathered from certain sources, traditions, texts and inscriptions. According to Justin, he was in possession of India. The inclusion of western India, as far as the Arabian Sea, in his empire is indubitably proved by the Junāgarh (Girnār) Rock Inscription of Rudradāman I of about 150 AD, which tells of a dam constructed to produce a reservoir or lake 'of beautiful sights' (*sudarśana*) for irrigation under the administration of the provincial governor (*rāṣṭriya*) ruling the *rāṣṭra*, then known by the names of Ānarta and Surāṣṭra, as a province of the empire of Chandragupta.[52] The governor's name, as given in the inscription, is Puṣyagupta. That western India formed an integral part of the Mauryan empire is proved by the find of

the copies of Aśokan edicts at Girnār and Sopārā (Sūrpāraka of *Pāli* texts), located in Thana near Mumbai.[53] The evidence for south India is not equally unassailable, and doubts have been raised about Chandragupta's connection with the south. Some historians are inclined to ascribe its conquest to his son and successor Bindusāra.[54] As no contemporary source throws a clear light on the extent of Chandragupta's empire – Megasthenes and *Arthaśāstra* both being silent on the subject – a final opinion must await a clinching evidence, but on the present showing the case for Chandragupta's large empire appears to be quite strong. The *Mahāvaṁsa* records his installation in the 'sovereignty of Jambudvīpa' by Chāṇakya.[55] Despite the vagueness of such remarks, they do leave the impression that the rule of Chandragupta Maurya was not limited to north but extended over a good part of India, south of the Vindhyas.

Attention may be drawn to the Jaina tradition regarding Chandragupta's association with the south which shows that Chandragupta, at some stage in his career, renounced the throne under the influence of his teacher, the Jaina saint Bhadrabāhu, whom he followed towards the south, till both teacher and pupil settled down at a place in Karnataka, known as Śravaṇa Belgolā. It is said that Bhadrabāhu led this Jaina migration towards the south to escape from Magadha, which was then under the grip of a severe famine.[56] Some local archaeological evidences tend to support the Jaina tradition. An inscription of about AD 600 mentions 'the pair (*yugma*) Bhadrabāhu along with Chandragupta *muni*.' Their association is repeated in few other local inscriptions. In one of the inscriptions both have been deified.[57] A hillock at Śravaṇa Belgolā is named Chandragiri, since Chandragupta is supposed to have lived there and performed penances. There is also a temple called Chandragupta *basati*, presumably erected by Chandragupta. It may be noted that the division of the Jainas into the Digambara and Śvetāmbara

sects dates from this migration. It may also explain the mystery of the sudden disappearance from the seat of power of such an emperor as Chandragupta, while at the peak of his career. It is pertinent to observe that Jainism was then a popular religion at Pāṭaliputra. The Nanda rulers were inclined towards Jainism and had Jaina ministers. The drama *Mudrārākṣasa* depicts the important position of the Jainas at the court of Pāṭaliputra and makes Chāṇakya deploy a Jaina monk as his chief instrument for the destruction of the Nandas.

It is likely that Chandragupta, being a follower of Jainism, when he advanced in age, opted for the ascetic way of life and settled down to practise penance at a place, which must have been situated within the limits of his vast empire. This hypothesis is strengthened by the discovery of as many as eight Minor Rock Edicts of Aśoka from Karnataka and two from Andhra Pradesh,[58] places not very far from Śravaṇa Belgolā. That a fairly large part of south India was included in the Mauryan empire, is indicated by the internal evidence of his edicts wherein Cholas, Pāṇḍyas, Satiyaputras and Keralaputras are mentioned as his neighbours and his influence is said to have extended as deep as Tāmraparṇī,[59] i.e., present day Sri Lanka. The *Mudrārākṣasa* claims that his sway extended up to the southern ocean. We know from his Rock Edict XIIIth that Kaliṅga was the only region where Aśoka waged a war, and after conquering it, he renounced for good all such conquests which involved violence and bloodshed.[60] Aśoka's predecessor Bindusāra cannot, perhaps, be credited with any fresh conquests of south India. The natural inference, therefore, can be that this conquest was made by Chandragupta himself.[61] Thus, practically, the whole of India, extending up to the Hindukush in the north-west, described as the scientific frontier of India, with the exception of the Cholas, Pāṇḍyas, Satiyaputras and Keralaputras and the region to the west of the river

Brahmaputra, lay under the banner of the founder of Mauryan dynasty. As already noted, his reign may be taken to have commenced in about 324 or 323 BC and ended in 299 BC as indicated by the *Purāṇas* which assign him a total reign period of 24 years.

Chandragupta was not only an accomplished soldier and a great conqueror but an equally astute and conscientious administrator, a fact which is amply supported by the accounts of Megasthenes, the accredited ambassador from Syria, who spent some years in the court of Pāṭaliputra. The Mauryan system of administration, which seems to be at the root of the subsequent administrative development of India, may owe something to his predecessors, but there can be no denying the fact that much of it was due to his own constructive ability and the genius of his celebrated chancellor Chāṇakya. The theory that there are 'fairly close resemblances between the fiscal and bureaucratic arrangements in contemporary Egypt and Syria, on one side, and the system of the *Arthaśāstra*, on the other', in effect, suggests a common origin for the Mauryan state supposed to underlie the *Arthaśāstra* and the Hellenistic states of Egypt and Syria. This common origin is believed to be the administrative system prevailing in the Achaemenian empire to which the Hellenistic states were successors. And as part of north-west India was, for some time before the advent of Alexander, included in the Achaemenian empire, the suggestion that India also copied the model, gains plausibility. In the opinion of scholars however, the above hypothesis does not seem to hold good. The inscriptions of Aśoka, they point out, do not show evidence of any census of towns and villages, their inhabitants and resources, the maintenance of which was a characteristic feature of the Achaemenian system. Similarly, as regards the *adhyakṣas* and other officers, only an indigenous origin seems conceivable for them. One need not, therefore, necessarily think of foreign influence in these matters.

The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the *Indica* of Megasthenes are our main sources of information about the administrative system of Chandragupta. Welcome light is thrown on some obscure points by the inscriptions of Aśoka and an important information is furnished by the Junāgarh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman. The head of administration was the king, who still bore the traditional title of *rājā*, notwithstanding his undoubted imperial status. He was considered to be a mere mortal, though a preferred mortal, the beloved of the deities. Being at the pivot of the system and the fountain-head of all administration, he appointed, promoted and demoted the officials of the state. He was, however, not an unqualified autocrat. Pure autocracy is not contemplated in Hindu polity and theory of sovereignty. *Dharma* or law was supposed to be the sovereign, and king was deemed to be the *daṇḍa* or the supreme executive, upholding and enforcing the *dharma*. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VIII. 26) describes the king as the defender of *dharma* (*dharmasya goptā*). Megasthenes, giving details of his daily routine, represents him as a most hard-working official. He did not sleep during the daytime. As the chief justice of the state he remained in the court for the whole day, without attending to his personal comforts. 'The palace is open to all comers even when the king is having his hair combed and dressed. It is then that he gives audience to ambassadors and administers justice to his subjects'.[62] It is a 'minute schedule of busy life for the king with particular injunction not to make his petitioners wait at his door but to hear all urgent calls at once.'[63] Kauṭilya puts the following ideal before the king: 'For a king his *vrata* (religious vow) is constant activity in the cause of his people (*utthānaṁ*); his best religious ceremony is the work of administration (*kāryānuśāsanaṁ*); his highest charity (*dakṣiṇā*) is equality of treatment meted out to all.'[64] It may be observed that Aśoka also subscribed to this ideal. It is mentioned in his Rock Edict VI, as to how he

used to be ready for public work at all hours and places, even 'when he is dining or in his harem or at the place of worship.'[65] Chandragupta had a bodyguard of armed women who followed him at the hunt on horses and elephants or chariots. Kauṭilya mentions, that the king was attended by women, armed with bows.[66] He had also a guard of 24 elephants, as noted by Megasthenes.

The king had military, judicial, legislative, as well as, executive duties. In his task of administration he was assisted by a number of ministers (*mantrin*) who were the highest officials of the state and received a salary of 48000 *paṇas* per annum.[67] They constituted a kind of central committee of the cabinet and were generally persons known for their ability and integrity. Each one of them, probably, held charge of one or more departments about which he advised the king. Beside the *mantrins,* there was also a *mantri-pariṣad* or council of ministers. The existence of the *pariṣad* as an important element of the Mauryan constitution is corroborated by the third and sixth Rock Edicts of Aśoka.[68] The members of the *mantri-pariṣad* were not identical with the *mantrins*. Their salary being only 12000 paṇas each, they evidently occupied a position inferior to the *mantrins*. They do not seem to have been consulted on ordinary occasion, but were summoned along with the *mantrins* when some *ātyayika kārya*, i.e. emergency work had to be transacted.[69] The classical sources refer to its members as councillors and assessors who advised the king 'in the management of public affairs.' In the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali the council of Chandragupta has been mentioned as *Chandragupta sabhā*.[70] That the council was deemed to be a source of strength to the king's position is suggested by Pāṇini who refers to it as king's *pariṣad-bala*.[71] At the same time the king's autocracy had some check in his *mantri-pariṣad*, which he had to consult on all important matters of policy and administration.

Beside the *mantrins* and the *mantri-pariṣad*, there was

another class of *amātyas* or *sacivas* who filled the great administrative and judicial appointments. The information, obtaining in the *Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra* regarding the employment of *amātyas*[72] as the chief executive and judicial officers of the state, is supported by the classical writers. For example, Strabo has noted that the seventh caste consists of councillors and assessors (*symbouloi* and *synedroi*) of the king. To these persons belong the offices of state, tribunals of justice, and the whole administration of public affairs.[73] Megasthenes testifies to a highly organised bureaucracy, in charge of the administration. According to the information supplied by him, those who have charge of city (*astynomoi*) are divided into six bodies of five each.[74] The six boards acting together exercised a general superintendence over public works, prices, harbours and temples.[75] The classical sources also mention some special officers of the intelligence department whose duty was to 'enquire into and superintend all that goes on in India and make report to the king.' Other officers, such as, king's advisers, treasurers of the state and arbiters (judges), both civil and criminal, the generals of the army and the chief magistrates who are really the chief executive officers or heads of departments are also mentioned.[76]

One of the key departments of the central government was the army, whose numerical strength has been estimated at 60,0000 infantry, 30,000 horses, 9,000 elephants and 800 chariots.[77] It was not something like an irregular force but the standing army of Chandragupta, a permanent limb of the state 'whose discipline, organisation and administration reflect the highest degree of efficiency achieved in the ancient Orient.' According to Megasthenes, the control of the army was vested in a war-office consisting of thirty members divided into six boards of five each. Each board was in charge of the following departments: (1) admiralty, (2) transport, (3) infantry, (4) cavalry, (5) elephants and

(6) chariots.[78] Kauṭilya refers to *adhyakṣa*s of *patti* (infantry), *aśva* (horses), *hasti* (elephants) and *ratha* (chariots), as also to the boards of the four divisions.[79] Classical sources give some account of the equipment of the army. Arrian, for example, says[80] that 'the foot soldiers carry a bow equal in length the man who bears it. There is nothing, which can resist an Indian archer's shot. Some are equipped with javelins, instead of bows, but all wear a sword which is broad in blade.'

In the administration of justice the king stood at the top. Beside the royal court, there were special tribunals of justice both in cities (*nagara*) and countryside (*janapada*). The courts were of two types, viz., i) *dharmasthīya* which was presided over by three *dharmasthas* and three *amātyas* and ii) *kaṅṭakaśodhana* consisting of three *pradeṣṭris* and three *amātyas.*[81] The *Arthaśāstra* recognises the authority of the village courts, which were independent of imperial control. Here the village elders decided the cases with which the people were obliged to abide by.[82] Greek writers inform us that 'theft was a thing of very rare occurrence' among Indians. It was so, perhaps, because of the stringency of the penal code. While minor offences were penalised with fines, deterrent punishment was meted out for more serious crimes. Megasthenes informs us that a person who injured an artisan was put to death, and the same punishment was reserved for those who evaded sales tax or embezzled government accounts.[83] Equally severe punishment was awarded in the form of mutilation of limbs in proportion to the degree of crime committed. Whipping, torture and externment were quite common.[84]

The intelligence department was very well organised and employed an extensive network of spies and secret agents who were spread throughout the empire, keeping an eye over government officials and the people ensuring overall security of the state. Kauṭilya makes a mention of two classes

of spies called, *saṅstha* (the stationary ones) and *sañchārin* (the moving ones).[85] The Greek writers refer to *episkopi* (overseers) who gathered information from all places and transmitted it to appropriate authorities. Strabo tells us that inspectors (overseers), who were appointed only from among the best and most trustworthy persons, were 'entrusted with the superintendence of all that is going on and it is their duty to report privately to the king.'[86] Sometimes, women were also employed as secret agents. Touring spies were chosen from palmists, because they had opportunities of mixing with people.

Administration of a vast empire, naturally, required huge revenue, for which all possible sources, urban or rural, agriculture, forests, mines or trade are described in detail. The main source of the state's revenue, however, was the land-tax (*bhāga*) which was fixed theoretically at one sixth of the produce, but was in practice, generally, a higher proportion varying with local economic conditions. Taxes on sales manufacture etc., also generated a big share of revenue. Kauṭilya's scheme of administration envisages large-scale nationalisation of industries.[87] The state possessed vast estates and forests as its property. It also monopolised the mines and minerals and traded its products. The *samāhartā*, or the collector general, was responsible for the collection of revenues and keeping proper records thereof.[88] The department of agriculture nurtured special gardens for the cultivation of medicinal plants. Similarly, the department of mines had to explore new mines. The minerals, which were worked in those days, included gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, iron, bitumen etc. Forests were carefully conserved and classified, such as, the forests of timber, creepers and canes, fibres of different kinds, etc. Among the forest produce are also mentioned the hides, skins, sinews (*snāyu*) bones, teeth, horns, hoofs and tails of different creatures including crocodiles, leopards, tigers, lions, elephants, etc. There were

also forests, which were treated as sanctuaries for the protection of wildlife from hunters.[89] The livestock of the country was the special care of the state, which provided pastures for grazing.[90] The state exercised control over trade by land and waterway, river or sea, and kept a watch at river banks and seashore, restricting all traffic to state boats and ships.[91] The state controlled the supply, price, purchase and sale of commodities through the superintendent of commerce. Anyone, charging prices in excess of the fixed scale, was sure to invite heavy punishment.[92]

The main heads of state's expenditure included the maintenance of the king and his family and court, salaries of officials, upkeep of government offices and development and exploitation of state property, including forests and mines, and the promotion of works of public utility.[93] A considerable part of the revenue was spent on the army establishments. The artisans also received maintenance from the imperial treasury. Philosophers, including Brāhmaṇas and *Śramaṇas* or ascetics, also received royal bounty.[94] Though it was maintained in a state of high military efficiency, the Mauryan empire displayed some significant characteristics of a welfare state and paid due attention to the various measures beneficial to the people's progress and prosperity. A considerable part of the revenue was spent in such benevolent activities as construction of roads, development of irrigation facilities, grants to religious and educational institutions, development and extension of medical and health facilities, maintenance of old and helpless, and so on. In agriculture the state aided cultivation, if necessary, with the supply of seeds, bullocks, labour and agricultural tools like ploughs, ropes, sickles, etc. It provided for irrigation facilities, such as, canals, lakes and wells.[95] Attention has already been drawn to the embankment of the Sudarśana lake, fulfilling the irrigational needs of a large part of Kathiawar, built by an officer of Chandragupta Maurya.

The Mauryan empire was divided into a number of provinces.[96] The general set-up of provincial administration, during Chandragupta's reign, is likely to have been the same, as is reflected in the edicts of Aśoka. While the central part of the empire (*Prāchya-Prasii*) was under the direct administration of the emperor himself, the outlying provinces, such as, Uttarāpatha (capital at Taxila) Avantiraṭṭha or Avantipatha (Ujjainī) and Dakṣiṇāpatha (Suvarṇagiri) were under the charge of governors or viceroys who were princes of the royal blood (*kumāra*), as far as possible.[97] They enjoyed wide-ranging powers and maintained their own courts, judiciary and police force. Beside the imperial provinces, the Mauryan India included a number of territories which enjoyed a certain amount of semi-autonomous status. The tribes and clans, e.g., Licchavi, Vrijjika, Mallaka, Kuru, Pañcāla, Gandhāra, Kamboja, Bhoja, Andhra, Pulinda etc., seem to have had a 'democratic form of government.' It is pertinent to observe, that in spite of the great centralising tendency of the Mauryan rule, many of them survived and emerged as independent states on the downfall of the empire.[98] The provinces were, probably, further divided into *janapadas*, *pradeśas* (regions), *āhāras* or *viṣayas* (districts). Kauṭilya provides a far more intensive account of rural administration than Megasthenes.[99] The lowest unit of provincial administration was the *grāma* (village) which enjoyed sufficient amount of autonomy. The administrative and judicial authority of its business was vested in the *grāmikas*, *grāmabhojakas* or *āyuktas* who were, no doubt, assisted by the village elders.[100]

Some features of self-government were also retained in urban administration. A good account of the municipal administration of the Mauryas is furnished by Megasthenes. He makes a mention of special urban officials – *astynomois* – who formed six small councils, each consisting of five men. Each council supervised one of the following spheres of the

town's life: 'The members of the first look after everything relating to the industrial arts. Those of the second attend to the entertainment of foreigners. To these, they assign lodgings, and they keep watch over their modes of life by means of those persons whom they give to them for assistants. They escort them in the way when they leave the country, or in the event of their dying, forward their property to their relatives. They take care of them when they are sick, and if they die, bury them. The third body consists of those who inquire when and how births and deaths occur with the view not only of levying a tax, but also in order that births and deaths, among both high and low, may not escape the cognizance of the government. The fourth body superintends trade and commerce. Its members have charge of weights and measures and see that the products in their season are sold by public notice. No one is allowed to deal in more than one kind of commodity, unless he pays a double tax. The fifth class supervises manufactured articles which they sell by public notice. What is new is sold separately from what is old, and there is a fine for mixing the two together. The sixth and the last class consists of those who collect the tenths of the prices of the articles sold. Fraud in the payment of taxes is punished with death. . . . Such are the functions which these bodies separately discharge. In their collective capacity they have charge both of their special departments, and also of matters affecting the general interests, as the keeping of public buildings in proper repair, the regulation of prices, the care of markets, harbours and temples.'[101] The account given by Megasthenes makes it evident as to which questions of urban administration were the most significant, demanding special attention of the authorities. The elaborate arrangement of town councils is likely to have prevailed in, at least, the major towns like Pāṭaliputra, if not in all the smaller towns of the empire. The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya also furnishes us with a detailed scheme of the

administration of cities and towns.[102] Kauṭilya calls the officer in charge of the cities *nāgaraka*. His duties are generally similar to the functions of the boards of Megasthenes.

Questions have been raised as to how far does the actual administration of the Mauryas correspond to the administrative system as described in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya.[103] It is true that the text being theoretical in character, it sets forth what according to it should be the ideal scheme of administration. It describes a system which any state that wants to prosper should follow. A state intending to be well-managed, could hardly afford to avoid setting up in actual practice a system of administration, more or less, similar to the one recommended in the text. It is also quite evident that the system, as envisaged in the *Arthaśāstra*, does not seem to have been thought out by Kauṭilya for the first time. It may be supposed that such a system of administration was conceived as necessary in the teaching of the *śāstra* from the early days. On the whole, the administrative structure that evolved during the Mauryan age may be taken to conform a great deal to the ideal laid down in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya,[104] that is, the happiness of the people should be the supreme goal of a political system and in that respect it may be characterised as a welfare state. The detailed information, gathered from the *Arthaśāstra* and the classical accounts, go a long way to indicate that the intent and functioning of the Mauryan system of administration was directed entirely to the common weal. It has been observed that even Akbar 'the greatest of the Mughals had nothing like it and it may be doubted if any of the ancient Greek cities were better organised'. The rather incongruous remark of Justin[105] that Chandragupta (Sandrocottus) forfeited the name of liberator, turning India into a slave camp, since, after securing power, he subjected his people to oppression, those same peoples which he had freed from foreign domination can, perhaps, be understood in the light of the

peculiar circumstances of the time- the exigencies of a newly founded imperial unity. The tentacles of the state power pervaded the nook and corner of the empire. Hordes of spies and secret agents, constantly prowling around, reported on public and private life alike.[106] The legal system also was, unavoidably, harsh and by its very rigour must have shot the mark. Only a few years later Aśoka detected its severity and mellowed it by providing a more humane face. He instituted the system of itinerant *mahāmātras* to check maladministration of justice in the outlying provinces.[107] The police-state which the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya delineates must have been awe-inspiring to the individual but its limitations were clear. The normal life of the people, though watched and reported upon, was not interfered with. The object of espionage was to keep the king informed about public opinion by direct reports and also for reasons of security. By a system of quick communication, developments in the farthest provinces were transmitted to the headquarters.

Chandragupta, thus, emerges as the most outstanding figure that the history of India had ever known. A reappraisal of the Indian political scene about the beginning of the 3rd centruy BC, would strike the remarkable change that had come over it, since the departure of Alexander about a quarter century ago. The powerful Nanda dynasty had been overthrown from Magadha. He was the first Indian leader who had to confront the distressing consequences of an European and foreign invasion of his country, the conditions of depression and disorganisation to which it was exposed, and then to achieve the unique distinction of recovering the country's freedom from the yoke of Greek rule by obliterating all traces of foreign occupation from the north-west and the adjoining borderland. He was again the first Indian king who established his rule over an extended India, of which the borders now touched the distant land of Persia, an India greater than even the British India. The valleys of

the Indus and the Ganges, for the first time in history, were brought together by the ties of one political authority. And he was, perhaps, also the first Indian king who extended his authority over southern India as far as northern Karnataka, and represented in a visible form the first realisation of an old dream of the united Bhāratavarṣa. The ideal of the *cakravartin* is brought down to earth from the cloud-land of religious myth and legend, and the *cakravartīkṣetram*, the sphere of the sole sovereign (*ekarāṭa*), is clearly defined in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya as the whole of India, extending from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean and a thousand *yojanas* across.[108] The conquests and military exploits of Chandragupta Maurya mark the fruition of the ideal of a united India under an *ekarāṭa* or *cakravartin* and bring to completion the Kauṭilyan concept of *cakravartīkṣetram*. To Chandragupta also goes the credit to give India for the first time a continuous history as also a unified history, a history affecting India as a whole, and as a unit, in the place of merely histories of particular peoples and regions of India. By removing internal dissensions and squabbles and uniting the people, he successfully carved out a national identity for India.

To govern efficiently such a vast empire, stretching from the borders of Persia up to those of Cholas and Pāṇḍyas in southern India, was no easy task in those early times, when transport or communication between distant parts was so difficult and dilatory in the absence of mechanical facilities. The administrative system, which he devised, was based on an appropriate polity with greater centralised control. The system was so sound and efficient and army so strong that the empire established by him endured for more than a hundred years without any external aggression or internal upheaval, leaving his successors to devote themselves to the well-being of the people, both material and spiritual. And they did it with remarkable aplomb, with his grandson Aśoka

leaving a name as the most benevolent monarch in the annals of the world. If the Greek accounts are to be trusted, Chandragupta started his active political career while still a young boy and he ceased to reign at the comparatively early age of less than fifty years. By any standard it was a unique record of accomplishment, especially so for one who had, perhaps, not been born to royalty. His achievements placed India on the political map of the world. The ambitious successors of Alexander were henceforth eager to maintain cordial relations with her. For three generations, at least, the Greeks did not renew the aggression of Alexander and Seleucus on secluded India and were content to maintain friendly, diplomatic and commercial relations with her.

On the abdication of Chandragupta, his son Bindusāra ascended the throne in c. 299 BC. The country was facing a severe famine and the king had to make arrangements to cope with the situation. From the Sohgaurā bronze plaque inscription it has been deduced, that by the order of the *mahāmātra* of Śrāvastī from Manavasi, evidently the then headquarter of the Śrāvastī division, two storehouses consisting of three storeys or portions, situated in the Vaṁśagrāma (Bānsgāon, 6 miles west of Sohgaurā) were constructed for the storage of grains to be distributed in time of distress.[109] If this interpretation be accepted, then it shows the attempt of the king to tackle the difficult problem facing him. The *mahāmātra* being asked to tackle the famine is very much like the contemporary scene when district magistrates are pressed into service to oversee relief operations under similar situations. Attention may also be drawn to Mahāsthān fragmentary stone plaque inscription which seems to preserve the order of another *mahāmātra* to the officer of Puṇḍravardhana to replenish the storehouse in apprehension of an impending scarcity for the use of Saṁvaṅgīya people.[110]

Bindusāra had, perhaps, the misfortune of being the son

of an illustrious father and the father of a more illustrious son. Not much information about him and his reign is available. He was known by his title *Amitraghāta* (slayer of foes) which is a restoration in Sanskrit of the *Amitrachates* of Athenaios, and *Allitrochades* of Strabo, and who is stated to have been the son of Sandrocottus.[111] Fleet prefers the rendering *Amitrakhāda* or devourer of enemies.[112] The title must have been earned by him by virtue of some of his conquests. But details of such conquests are lacking. A vague hint is given by the author of *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, and by Hemachandra and Tāranātha who state that the apostle of violence, Chāṇakya, outlived Chandragupta and continued as a minister of Bindusāra as 'one of his great lords.'[113] According to Tāranātha, the Khaśas and Nepalas rose in revolt against the king and were put down by Aśoka.[114] It appears that, taking advantage of the sudden removal of the strong arm of Chandragupta, probably by abdication, some of the outlying regions tried to break away from the empire, but were brought back to submission. Tāranātha further states, that Chāṇakya accomplished the destruction of the kings and ministers of sixteen towns and made Bindusāra master of all the territory between the eastern and the western sea. The conquest of the territory between the eastern and western seas has been taken by scholars to refer to the annexation of the Deccan.[115] But we should not forget that, already in the time of Chandragupta, the Maurya empire extended from Surashtra to Bengal (*Gangaridae*), i.e. from the western to the eastern sea. Thus, Tāranātha's statements 'mean nothing more than the suppression of a general revolt' in the Mauryan empire and the title *Amitraghāta* or *Amitrakhāda* may also be understood in this light. In fact, no early tradition expressly connects the name of Bindusāra with the conquest of the Deccan.[116] The story of the subjugation of sixteen towns may or may not be true but we gather from the *Divyāvadāna*[117] that he had to face

an uprising of the citizens of Takṣaśilā inspired by the misdeeds of the government officials. The king is said to have dispatched Aśoka there. While the prince was nearing Takṣaśilā with his troops, the people came out to meet him, and said, "we are not opposed to the prince nor even to king Bindusāra, but the wicked ministers (*dustāmātyaḥ*) insult us. It may be noted that Aśoka himself refers in his Kaliṅga Edict to incidents of high-handedness of the Mauryan officials in the outlying provinces. Aśoka succeeded in pacifying the people of Takṣaśilā. The prince is, afterwards, said to have entered the 'Svaśa *rājya*' which cannot be satisfactorily identified.[118]

It is evident, however, that even if Bindusāra did not add to, he certainly preserved the integrity of the dominions inherited from his predecessor. At the same time, we have evidence to show, that he was a person of happy-go-lucky disposition, given to ease and luxury. We are indebted to, at least, three classical writers for our knowledge about Bindusāra following his father's policy of friendly relations with the Seleucid ruling family of Western Asia. He is reported to have maintained cordial relations with Syria and Egypt, then ruled by Antiochus I Soter and Ptolemy Philadelphus, respectively. Strabo informs us that Deimachus was sent to the court of Allitrochades, son of Sandrocottus, as an envoy by the king of Syria.[119] According to Pliny, another envoy Dionysius, was sent by Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285–247 BC). The Egyptian king was a contemporary of both Bindusāra and Aśoka, but H.C. Raychaudhuri points out that, as the name of Aśoka is conspicuously absent in the classical records, it is more probable that the envoy was sent to the court of Bindusāra.[120] The third reference is more interesting. Athenaeus recounts an anecdote of private friendly correspondence between Antiochus Soter, king of Syria, and Bindusāra which shows that the Mauryan emperor dealt with his Hellenistic contemporaries on terms of equality and

friendliness. It may be pointed out that 'Bindusāra asked for a sample of Greek wine, some raisins and a sophist'.[121] Antiochus replied: ' We shall send you the figs and the wine, but in Greece the laws forbid a sophist to be sold.'[122] As noted above, Antiochus also sent Daimachus to his court as an ambassador.

According to the Buddhist Theravāda tradition, Bindusāra was a votary of the Brāhmaṇas and a staunch supporter of the Brāhmaṇical sects. He seems to have been tolerant towards the Ājīvikas as well, for we gather from the *Divyāvadāna* that an Ājīvika fortune teller resided at his court, who, when Aśoka was born, announced that he, among his sons, was destined to be the king.[123] According to the Sri Lankan accounts Bindusāra ruled for 28 years, while the *Purāṇas* assign him a rule of 25 years. This discrepancy seems to have arisen because the *Purāṇas* do not refer to the interregnum of 4 years between Aśoka's accession and coronation, but to the individual reign of the king. Thus, the reign of Bindusāra may have come to an end in the year 274 BC which was, perhaps, the year of Aśoka's accession.

NOTES

1. R.K. Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, pp. 3ff; Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp.5 ff.; G.M. Bongard-Levin, *op.cit.,* pp. 16 ff.
2. J.W. Mc Crindle, *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*, (hence abbreviated as *The Invasion of India*), pp. 3ff; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, pp. 78–80; B.C. Sinha, *Studies in Alexander's Campaigns*, pp. 58ff.
3. Roman historian Justin lived in second century AD and composed an Epitome of which Book XII gives an account of Alexander's campaigns in India.
4. R.K. Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, Appendix-I
5. Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, Chap. LXII; cf. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, pp. 311; cf. *bāla eva hi lokena sambhāvitamahodayaḥ*, *Mudrārākṣasa*; p. 452.
6. R.K. Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, pp. 16–17, B.M.Barua, *Aśoka and his Inscriptions*, Pt I, p. 51.

7. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya, *Bimbisāra to Aśoka*, pp. 72ff; E.J. Rapson, *Ancient India*, p. 53; W.W.Tarn, *Greeks in Bactria and India*, p. 47, n 2.
8. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, 58.
9. Cf. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 327. Plutarch, *op.cit.* Chap. LXII.
10. *Mahāvaṁsa Tīkā*, p. 123; *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, VIII. 291–301.
11. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p.126.
12. *Arthaśāstra*, VII, 10, 14; VIII 14.
13. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p.406.
14. I.1,2, 13-15.
15. VIII. 44, 2070 ff.
16. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, III. 3.86.
17. *Cambridge History of India.* Vol.I, pp. 423–24.
18. Navaratna S.Rajaram and David Frawley, *Vedic Aryans and the Origins of Civilization*, pp. 45ff; cf. Koenraad Elst, *Update on the Aryan Invasion Debate,* pp. 87–88, 332–34.
19. *C.I.I.* Vol.III, Inscriptions of Early Gupta Kings and their Successors, ed. and tr. J.F.Fleet, pp. 139–42.
20. *Mudrārākṣasa*, I.II.
21. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, V. 383ff.
22. *Āvasyaka Sūtra*, p. 434ff.
23. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, pp. 327ff.
24. Plutarch, *Life of Alexander,* Chap. LXII; McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 311.
25. Cf. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 327; cf. K.A. Nilakanta Sasri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, p. 144.
26. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 328.
27. Cf. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, p. 137, n.3.
28. Sudhakar Chattopadhyay, *Bimbisāra to Aśoka*, pp. 79ff; see also R.K.Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and his Times*, pp. 44-45; H.C.Raychaudhuri, *P.H.A.I.*, p. 242.
29. *Milindapañho*, IV.8.26; cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F.Maxmuller, Vol. XXXVI, p. 147.
30. *Mudrārākṣasa*, p. 386.
31. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, Cants VIII.
32. *Mahāvaṁsa*, pp. XXXIX ff.
33. C.D. Chatterji, "Observations on the *Bṛhat-kathā", Indian Culture,* I. pp. 210ff.
34. The Nanda rule extended up to Kaliṅga as is shown by the Hāthīguṁphā Inscription of Khāravela. Some Karnataka inscriptions of about 12th century AD even state that it extended to the province of Kuntala to the north of Karnataka.
35. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, pp. 221–22.

36. *Arthaśāstra*, VIII, 2.
37. J.W. Mc Crindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 327.
38. Arrian, V.20, 7 ff; cf. J.W. Mc Crindle, *The Invasion of India*, pp. 129 ff.
39. *Ibid.*, V. 20.7.
40. *Ibid.*, VI.27.2.
41. Cf. J.W. Mc Crindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 50.
42. Appian quoted J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 404.
43. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 328.
44. J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature*, p. 107.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
46. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 410.
47. V. Smith, *Early History of India*, p. 140; cf. J.W. Mc Crindle, *The Invasion of India* p. 410.
48. *C.I.I.*, Vol. I. Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E.Hultzsch, pp. 2–3, 51, 84–85, 102.
49. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, pp. 271ff.
50. Mc Crindle, *The Invasion of India* p. 405.
51. Plutarch, *op.cit.* Chap. LXII.
52. Cf. Luders, *List of Brāhmī Inscriptions, Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.X. Appendix, p. 99; cf. *Kalpasūtra of Bhadrabāhu*, p.7; *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, p. XX.
53. B.M. Barua, *Aśoka and his Inscriptions*, Pt I, p. 75.
54. Cf. *J.B.O.R.S.*, II, pp. 78 ff.
55. Cf. *Mahāvaṁsa*, V. 15-18.
56. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, VIII.444; Literary works, such as, *Bṛhatkathā Kośa* of Hariṣeṇa (931 A.D.); *Bhadrabāhucharita* of Ratnanandi (c.1450 A.D.); Kannad works *Munivaṁsābhyudaya* (c.1680 A.D.) and *Rājāvalīkathe* record this tradition with some variations here and there; cf. V. Smith, *Early History of India*, p.154.
57. Cf. J.F.Fleet, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol.XXI, 1892, pp. 156ff; Asim Kumar Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, Vol. I. pp. 36–37.
58. Richard Saloman, *op.cit.* p. 138.
59. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 134.
60. N.A. Nikam and Richard McKeon, *The Edicts of Aśoka*, Foreword, pp. viii ff; B.M. Barua, *Aśoka and his Inscriptions*, Pt.I, p. 163.
61. Cf. R.Ayangar, *History of the Tamils*, p. 165ff.
62. Curtius, VIII, 9, quoted McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, p. 58, n.2.
63. *Arthaśāstra*, I.19.6 ff.
64. *Ibid.*, I.19.33 ff.
65. *C.I.I.* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E.Hultzsch, pp. 11 ff.
66. *Arthaśāstra*, I.21; cf. Strabo, XV. I.55.
67. *Ibid.*, V.3.
68. *C.I.I.* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E.Hultzsch, pp. 4 ff.

69. *Ātyayike kārye mantriūo mantripariṣadaṁ cāhūya brṇyāt.*
70. *Mahābhāṣya*, I.I. 68.
71. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, V.2.112.
72. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.9.1, 3.1.1, 4.1.1.
73. McCrincle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 85.
74. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 417-18; cf. McCrindle *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature.*
75. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 417-18.
76. McCrindle, *Ancient India as descibed by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 43, 89-90.
77. See Pliny, *Natural History* IV. 22, Cf. J.W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian,* p.139.
78. J.W.McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p.88.
79. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.33.
80. J.W.McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 225.
81. *Arthaśāstra*, 1, 19.10, 3.1.19.
82. *Ibid.,* 3.9.3ff.
83. *Ibid.*, 4.9.2-27.
84. *Ibid.,* 4.2ff.
85. *Ibid.*, 1.11.2ff.
86. J.W.McCrindle, *Ancient India* as described by *Magasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 217-18.
87. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.12ff; cf.D.D.Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 208; R.P.Kangle, *op.cit.* pt.III. pp. 183–84.
88. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.6.1-9
89. *Ibid.*, 2.2.1ff.
90. *Ibid.*, 2.34.6-8
91. *Ibid.*, 2.28 ff.
92. *Ibid.*, 4.2.1. ff.
93. *Ibid.*, 2.6.11, 23–26.
94. See V.R.R. Dikshitar, *The Mauryan Polity*, pp. 148 ff.
95. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.24.1ff.
96. *Ibid.*, 2.1.ff., 3.1. ff.
97. V.R.R. Dikshitar, *op.cit.*, p. 202; cf. *C.I.I.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p. 112.
98. *Arthaśāstra*, 11.1.ff
99. Richard Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time* p. 162;
100. The Kaliṅga Edicts refer to *āyuktas* who helped the princely viceroys and *mahāmātras* in carrying out imperial policy; cf. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.1.27-*Grāmavṛddhas.*

101. *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 87–88.
102. *Arthaśāstra*, 2.36 ff.
103. R.P.Kangle, *op.cit.* Pt.III. p. 210.
104. R.K.Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, pp. 373–393) has drawn an impressive list of parallelisms between this text and the inscriptions of Aśoka.
105. *The Invasion of India*, p. 327.
106. *Arthaśāstra*, 4.9.2-27.
107. See P.E.IV and Separate Kaliṅga Edict; cf. *Divyāvadāna, Aśokāvadāna* section.
108. *Arthaśāstra,* IX, 1.
109. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 82; Cf. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1894, pp. 87 ff.; *J.R.A.S.* 1907, pp. 523 ff.; *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. XI, Pt. I, pp. 32-48.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
111. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *P.H.A.I.*, p. 296, n.1.
112. Fleet, *J.R.A.S.*, 1909, p. 24.
113. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan,* VIII. 446 ff; *Indian Antiquary*, 1875 etc.
114. *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, p. 51.
115. Cf. V. Smith, *Early History of India*, p.149; *J.R.A.S.*1910 p.96.
116. Cf. *J.R.A.S.* 1919, p. 598.
117. *Divyāvadāna*, p. 371.
118. *Ibid.,* p. 372; cf. *I.H.Q.* 1930, p. 334.
119. Cf. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya, *Bimbisāra to Aśoka*, p. 99.
120. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *P.H.A.I.*, p. 299.
121. H.G. Rawilson, *India and West*, p. 39.
122. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India*, p. 409.
123. *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 370 ff.

V

BENIGN AUTOCRACY AND ITS LEGACIES

Bindusāra was succeeded by his son Aśoka, one of the greatest rulers known to history. The main sources for Aśoka's reign (c. 274–234 BC) are his inscriptions, numbering about forty, which are classified according to the surfaces on which they are inscribed – rocks, pillars and caves. Found all over India, these inscriptions throw light, not only on his political career, administration, religious faith, missionary activities, but also on his family and personal life. Traditions about Aśoka are also preserved in various other sources written in *Pāli*, Sanskrit and other languages. The trustworthiness of some of the literary traditions has to be accepted with a pinch of salt, especially such as the portrayal of Aśoka as a cruel and tyrannical person before his conversion to Buddhism and his subsequent transformation as a deeply pious and exemplary ruler. Such is not the case with his edicts, which being contemporary records are of unimpeachable testimony. The name 'Aśoka', however, occurs only in four inscriptions, viz. the Gujarrā, Māskī, Nittur and Udelgolam versions of his Rock Edicts. In all other available records he is mentioned as Devānaṁpiya Piyadasi (Devānaṁpriya Priyadarśin), that is, one of amiable look, beloved of gods. In the Greek versions of the edicts, discovered in Kandahar, the king is called Piyadasi (*Piodasses*); and in the Aramaic version, *prydrs* (Priyadarsi). The suggestion that Piyadasi was the real name of Aśoka[1] seems doubtful in the light of the fact that in the *Mudrārākṣasa* Chandragupta also is called,

Priyadarśin. Thus, Piyadasi or Priyadarśin, as in the case of his grandfather, seems to have been his title, and Aśoka his personal name.[2] The tradition often refers to him as Aśoka or Aśokavardhana.[3]

The Buddhist tradition is unanimous in affirming that there followed, after the demise of Bindusāra, a fierce fratricidal war in course of which Aśoka, the emperor's second eldest son, usurped the throne by defeating and killing all his step-brothers, including the elder Sumana or Susīma. While the northern Buddhist works represent the struggle as a duel between the two eldest claimants, the records of the southern Buddhist tradition aver, that in order to acquire the empire, Aśoka made short work of all his non-uterine brothers, ninety-nine in number, sparing only the youngest, the uterine brother Tiṣya.[4] According to the *Mahāvaṁsa Ṭīkā,*[5] Aśoka became notorious as Caṇḍāśoka for having killed his ninety-nine brothers. The killing of his brothers may be a wild exaggeration deliberately woven to emphasise the miraculous power of Buddhism, which transformed a monster of cruelty into an apostle of peace and harmony, but the fact that the formal coronation of Aśoka was delayed by four years after his accession makes it difficult to dismiss altogether the possibility of a fratricidal war for the Mauryan throne. It is pertinent to observe, that Aśokan inscriptions speak not of one brother, but of several, living in the thirteenth year of his reign not only in Pāṭaliputra, but also in various other towns of the empire. For example, in R.E.V[6] he makes solicitous allusion to the families of his brothers in a manner suggesting that several of these were living when the epigraph was inscribed years after the war of succession took place.

Aśoka's experiences as viceroy of Ujjainī and then of Takṣaśilā were greatly instrumental in his fine rearing as a capable ruler to be. The *Divyāvadāna* credits him, while yet a prince, with the suppression of a revolt in Takṣaśilā and

the conquest of the Svaśa (Khaśa?) country. It also informs us,[7] that his claim to the throne was supported by a ministerial group at the imperial court led by Rādhagupta. Like his two predecessors, Aśoka, for at least twelve years after being in the saddle, led the life of a 'normal Hindu rājā of the times' without anything to differentiate from the others. It is evident from Aśoka's R.E.VIII,[8] that going on *vihāra-yātrās*, pleasurable excursions was a favourite pursuit with the kings of those times and he, like all other kings, went frequently on such *vihāra-yātrās*, wherein he indulged in manifold diversions, the most pre-eminent being hunting, that is, *magavyā* (*mṛgayā*). In R.E. VI,[9] he makes a mention of certain occasions when he was not ordinarily supposed to have attended to the state-business, e.g. (1) when taking meals (*bhuṁjamānasa*), (2) when in the inner apartment of his palace (*orodhana*), (3) when in his bed-chamber (*gabhāgāra*), (4) when engaged in *vraca* (closet), (5) when out for a chariot drive or ride (*vacaṁhi va vinitaṁhi*) and (6) when in a pleasance (*uyāna, i.e. udyāna*). From the R.E.I,[10] it appears that Aśoka was also in the habit of keeping his subjects in good humour by feasting and amusing them. 'One mode of public entertainment practised by him was the celebration of *samājas*, festive gatherings, both of the edifying and convivial types.' From the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist works, we know that *samājas*[11] were intended to feast the palate or the eye and the ear of the people. While in the edifying type of *samājas* people were treated to dancing, music, wrestling etc., in the convivial type of *samājas* they were treated to dainty dishes, accompanied by much eating of meat. From the aforesaid edict, it is also inferred that huge quantity of meat soup was daily doled out from his palace to the needy and the poor and 'hundreds of thousand' animals were slaughtered every day in the royal kitchen for this purpose. There was, thus, nothing in his conduct, during the first twelve years (eight years since

consecration) of his reign, to foreshadow the remarkable transformation in his personality effected so suddenly by the Kaliṅga war and his subsequent conversion to Buddhism.

Following the footsteps of his illustrious grandfather, Aśoka followed a pacifist foreign policy, aimed at cultivating cordial relations with the contemporary rulers. Similarly, at the home front, he began with as aggressive a policy as that of Chandragupta himself. Kaliṅga became the first and the last victim of his policy of aggression and conquest. An account of the Kaliṅga war and its effects is enumerated in his Rock Edict XIII.[12] What is not made clear in the inscription, however, is the genesis of the war. Kaliṅga already was a part of the Nanda empire. Why did it then become necessary for Aśoka to reconquer it? In his edicts, Kaliṅgas are described as an unsubdued people, which shows that they repudiated allegiance to the imperial authority of Magadha and reclaimed their independence in the interval between the last Nanda ruler and himself. According to Pliny, whose source of information is, generally, supposed to have been Megasthenes, "the tribes called Calingae are nearest the sea. . . . the royal city of Calingae is called Parthalis. Over their king 60,000 foot soldiers, 1000 horsemen 700 elephants keep watch and ward in procinct of war".[13] The Kaliṅga kings seem to have raised their forces substantially during the period which elapsed from the time of Megasthenes to that of Aśoka, as is indicated by the casualities mentioned in the R.E.XIII. The existence of a powerful independent kingdom as a sort of wedge between the northern and southern parts of the Mauryan empire and having a big army 'in precinct of war' could not be a matter of indifference to the Mauryan suzerain. In the thirteenth year since his accession (that is, the ninth year after consecration) Aśoka advanced against the Kaliṅgas. A sanguinary war followed, involving much bloodshed and untold miseries to the people in general. "One hundred

and fifty thousand persons were thence carried away captive, one hundred thousand were there slain, and many times that number perished." Even the non-combatants, such as, the Brāhmaṇas, ascetics and householders were subjected to violence, slaughter and separation from the beloved ones. The high figures mentioned above seem to suggest that the invading Mauryan forces had to face something like a popular resistance in Kaliṅga. But local patriotism ultimately gave way to the organised might of the Mauryas. Aśoka emerged triumphant and Kaliṅga became a viceroyalty under the empire with, probably, two administrative centres established to govern it - a northern one Tosalī (Dhaulī) in Puri district of the present state of Orissa and a southern one at Jaugaḍa in the Ganjam district of the same state. Dhaulī and Jaugaḍa, located in ancient Kaliṅga, have yielded copies of Aśokan rock edicts. It is interesting, however, that the two copies contain edicts I-X and XIV, but in place of XI-XIII have two Separate Edicts. The two Separate Edicts at Dhaulī and Jaugaḍa contain exhortations to the royal officers (*mahāmātra*) at Tosalī and Sāmapā, respectively, to honour and enforce the king's wishes.[14] Recently a stone slab, containing fragments of the so-called Kaliṅga Edicts XII and XIV and of Separate Edicts I and II, has been found outside of the Kaliṅga region, that is, from Sannati, Gulbarga district, Karnataka.[15]

The conquest of Kaliṅga marks the high watermark of Magadhan policy of territorial aggrandizement. Probably, no other Indian ruler presided over such an extensive empire as Aśoka did. The extent of his empire may be inferred from the geographical distribution of his edicts and monuments. Hiuen Tsang (Yuan Chwang), travelling in India several centuries after Aśoka, records having seen religious edifices built by him from Kapiśī (Kafiristan), Nagar (Jalālābād) and Kashmir in the north-west to all the four divisions of Bengal (Karṇasuvarṇa, Tāmralipti, Puṇḍravardhana and Samataṭa)

in the east. It is also indicated by the internal evidence of some of the edicts, such as, the R.E.II, V and XIII, which make a mention of the people living on the borders of his empire. For example, in the south, these are mentioned as the Cholas, Pāṇḍyas, the Satiyaputras and Keralaputras, though even they are said to be within the sphere of his influence. In the south the Aśokan empire, thus, extended up to the Pennar river, beyond which lay the independent Tamil kingdoms of the Cholas, Pāṇḍyas, etc. In the north-west his dominion was co-terminous with the Syrian empire and extended over the territories inhabited by the Yonas, Kambojas and Gandhāras. The inclusion of Kashmir and Nepal in the northern region of Aśokan empire is supported by the evidence of Hiuen Tsang and Kalhaṇa, as well as the testimony of inscriptions, especially the pillar inscriptions of Rummindeī and Nigalī Sāgar. In the east it extended over Bengal and as far as the Brahmaputra, though definite evidence of the inclusion of Kāmarūpa is still wanting. From the copies of his rock edicts found from Saurashtra (Girnār) and Mahārashtra (Sopārā) it is obvious, that the Arabian Sea marked the western limits of his empire.

The Kaliṅga war, incidentally, became a turning point not only in the career of Aśoka, or the history of Magadha alone, but the history of India as a whole. Aśoka, who must have led the campaign personally, was deeply stirred by the horrors of the war and the miseries and bloodshed it entailed. The military success, wrested at a high price, brought about a radical change in the life and thoughts of the victor. Full with poignant remorse, a deep sense of piety was roused in his heart. 'Thus arose in his Sacred Majesty remorse for having conquered the Kaliṅgas because the conquest of a country, previously unconquered, implies the slaughter, death and carrying away captive of the people. This is matter of profound sorrow and regret to his Sacred Majesty . . . To-day if a hundredth or a thousandth part of

those who suffered in Kaliṅga were to be killed, to die or to be taken captive, it would be very grievous to the Beloved of gods.' Further he adds, 'Now that the country of the Kaliṅgas has been conquered, the Beloved of gods is devoted to an intense practice of the duties relating to *dhamma*, to a longing for *dhamma* and to the inculcation of *dhamma* among the people.' Anybody who reads these fervent words of the R.E.XIII would be struck by the intensity of his repentance and indelibility of the impression that the war made on him. In the glorious moment of his resounding victory he vowed to abandon aggressive war forever. Abjuring the Kauṭilyan ideal of militarism and expansionism, he became an ardent champion of peace, amity and cooperation. In Separate Kaliṅga Edict II,[16] he states, "It may occur to the unconquered frontier sovereigns; 'what is in the mind of the king in respect of us?' This much alone is my wish in respect of the frontier sovereigns that they may understand this, namely, that the Beloved of gods desires that they should be unperturbed towards me, they should trust me and they should have only happiness, not misery, from me." It is declared in R.E.IV[17] that 'the reverberation of the war-drums has been silenced' and has been replaced by the sound of the drum of piety. He did not feel contented by his own efforts and exhorted his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons not to think of making any new conquests.

It is generally thought that it was after the Kaliṅga war that Aśoka sought refuge in the teachings of the Buddha and became a convert to his faith, though he may have come under Buddhist influence earlier.[18] But the prevalent view, that he became a Buddhist soon after the conquest of Kaliṅga, does not seem to be borne out by the evidence on record. It is mentioned in the M.R.E.I,[19] which is assigned to the 12th year after coronation, that at the time of the setting up of the record the emperor 'had been an *upāsaka* for two and half years or more' only. For the first few months Aśoka,

on his own admission, was not very firm in his faith. It appears that for about a year he was lukewarm, but, thereafter, he became so strenuous in his exertions (*parākrama*) for the *dhamma* that his mind was ennobled with the aspiration of becoming the supreme ruler of the earth, not through territorial, but through spiritual conquest. The Minor Rock Edicts also refer to his contact with the *saṅgha*, and not the Kaliṅga war, as the prelude and cause of more intense activity. It may be observed, that activity in the period of *upāsakatva* is also described as *parākrama*, though it was surpassed by greater energy of the period after contact with the *saṅgha*. The explicit reference to *dharmakāmatā* as the result of the annexation of Kaliṅga, sometimes, after (*tato pachhā adhunā*) the war is significant to note. The use of the expressions *tato pachhā* and *adhunā* suggests that there was an intervening gap between the war and the intensity of Aśoka's *dharmaśīlana* and *dharmakāmatā*. It is gathered from the M.R.E.I and P.E.VI, that Aśokan edicts (*dhamma-lipi*) began to be issued a little after two and half years of his becoming an *upāsaka* and twelve years after his consecration. This would place his conversion to Buddhism a little less than nine and half years after his consecration, that is, a little less than one and half years after the conquest of Kaliṅga.[20]

There is sufficient positive evidence to show that Aśoka did embrace Buddhism, probably, in the ninth year of his reign in the aftermath of the Kaliṅga war. The Bhābrū (Calcutta-Bairāṭ) Rock Edict[21] pointedly mentions his reverence for the Buddhist trinity, viz., Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*. The M.R.E.I, as noted above, informs us that he came in close contact with the *saṅgha*, after having been an *upāsaka* for a year and a half. There are also others like R.E.VII[22] and Rummindeī Pillar Inscription[23] which speak of Aśoka's visit to holy centres of Buddhism like *saṁbodhi* and Lumminīgāma, that is, the places of Buddha's

enlightenment and birth, respectively. The above is a brief account of his conversion to Buddhism as gleaned from a critical study of his own records. It is interesting to note that the inscriptions make no mention, whatsoever, of any Buddhist saint or teacher who may have converted him or who may, afterwards, have become a source of his inspiration. The Buddhist texts, on the other hand, furnish us accounts, sometimes conflicting with each other, about his conversion to Buddhism. According to the Sri Lankan chronicles[24] a youngish monk named Nigrodha, whom distorted legend represents as the posthumous son of Aśoka's elder brother Sumana, was responsible for his admittance in Buddhism, but, afterwards, Aśoka came in contact with Moggaliputta Tissa, the head of Buddhist *saṅgha*, whose preponderating impact became instrumental in shaping the course of his life and career. It was under his influence that Aśoka sent his son Mahinda (Mahendra) and daughter Saṅghamittā (Saṅghamitrā) to Sri Lanka as the first missionaries of Buddhism. Northern Buddhist texts, however, credit another Buddhist teacher Upagupta with the conversion of the king, and further tell us that Mahendra, who converted Sri Lanka to Buddhism, was not his son but rather his younger brother.[25] As regards the silence of Aśoka in the edicts about the name of his Buddhist preceptor, it is natural to deduce that no Buddhist teacher of his day may have played any significant role in the matter of his conversion.

It is surprising, however, that, although abundant inscriptions become available with a dramatic suddenness for the study of Aśoka and his times, one finds involved in the most baffling problem as one approaches the question of his religious faith. Differences in the interpretation of his religious conviction are quite marked, and divergent views have been held on the subject from time to time. In the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* Aśoka has been said to be a devotee of Śiva.[26] Edward Thomas, on the authority of Abul Fazl, on whose

part lies the fault, says that Aśoka was a Jaina.[27] It may be noted here that Jina also was a title of the Buddha. Some other scholars have mintained that he always remained within the Brāhmaṇical Hindu fold and was not a Buddhist at all.[28] More or less, identical views have been held by H.H. Wilson and H.Heras. F.W. Thomas also thinks that there is a total omission of any allusion to Buddhism in the inscriptions.[29] J.F. Fleet has come to the conclusion that the *dhamma* of the Aśokan rock and pillar edicts was not Buddhism but simply *rājadharma,* i.e., code of conduct prescribed for pious kings.[30] Fleet appears not to have noticed the simple fact about *dhamma* that it was intended to be practised by the masses and not merely by the king himself. Some others think that in these edicts *dhamma* does not stand for Buddhism but for the simple piety which Aśoka wished for his subjects.[31]Tāranātha goes, as far as, associating Aśoka with Tantric Buddhism and mistaking him to be a devotee of the Mother-goddess.[32] It has been pointed out that the cult of Mother-goddess was prevalent among the humbler folk in Aśoka's time, but Tantric Buddhism developed many centuries later.[33] V.A.Smith remarks, at one place, that there is nothing, distinctively, Buddhistic in the *dhamma* of Aśoka.[34] D.R. Bhandarkar points out the contradiction[35] in Smith's views, when he notices the latter asserting, at another place, that the *dhamma* was saturated with Buddhist ethical thought.[36] R.K. Mookerji has tried to distinguish between Aśoka's personal religion, which he accepts was Buddhism, and the religion that he sought to introduce among the people at large.[37] With regard to the latter, he like V.A. Smith, thinks that it was certainly not Buddhism but the essence of all religions. D.R. Bhandarkar again demonstrates the discrepancy[38] in the views of Mookerji, since the latter had himself maintained elsewhere that Buddhism influenced the Essenes and Therapeutae.[39] It would be difficult to explain as to how Buddhism was able to cast its

shadow on these distant ideas, if Buddhism was confined only to the personal conviction of Aśoka which presupposes a restricted area of activity. D.R. Bhandarkar's own work on Aśoka, containing three chapters on his religious activities, also appears to suffer from discordant notes. He begins with the observation that Aśoka's *dhamma* may be described as the common property of all religions, repeats this assertion more than once, and finally concludes, that the *dhamma* was nothing but the code of conduct prescribed for the Buddhist laity.[40]

The puzzle, which has caused such a wide range of disagreement among scholars, is due to the fact that in his Minor Rock Edict I, almost certainly the first to be promulgated, Aśoka openly admits his conversion to Buddhism, but does not use the word *'dhamma'* which, in later inscriptions, represents the keynote of his new policy. Thus, while there can hardly be a dispute about Aśoka's conversion to and zeal for Buddhism, scholars differ in their opinion about the true nature of *dhamma* propagated by him. Its Buddhist affiliation has been questioned, because nowhere does it refer to the cardinal Buddhist doctrines, such as, the four noble truths (*ārya-satyāni*), the eightfold path (*aṣṭāṅgika-mārga*), the chain of causation (*pratītya-samutpāda*) or the Nirvāṇa. It is argued about *dhamma* that there is nothing in it that is particularly Buddhist, and Aśoka urged his subjects to respect not only Buddhist monks, but also Brāhmaṇas and ascetics of all sects. Some scholars are inclined to the view that the policy of *dhamma* was adopted chiefly for political ends, in order to bring about some degree of unity and solidarity in Aśoka's far-flung and incoherent empire. Analogies of Constantine and Charlemagne have been cited in support of the political motive theory.[41] It may be observed that an important outcome of his change of heart and conversion to Buddhism was the issuance of a large number of edicts. The objective, that these edicts were

intended to serve, was to inform the people about his policy as a ruler, his faith and principles of *dhamma* and the purpose behind its propagation. In the light of his unreserved expressions about the nature and necessity of *dhamma*, it should not be thought that Aśoka was acting in a double fashion or hypocritical manner. The inscriptions which delineate Aśoka's *dhamma* in detail, do not perhaps, have scope for a reading between the lines of a political ploy. Moreover, if there was, at all, any political motive behind the propagation of *dhamma*, then how do we explain the collapse of the Mauryan empire after the exit of Aśoka from the scene. The analogy of Constantine suffers from a radical incongruity. Constantine espoused a winning cause, whereas Aśoka put himself at the head of an unpopular religious movement.[42] The analogy of Charlemagne is also not very apt.' One of the greatest achievements of Charlemagne was not only to conquer the Saxons by sword,' but to convert them to Christianity as well. Aśoka had also conquered the Kaliṅgas by sword, but he did not try to convert them to Buddhism. The puzzle of Aśoka's faith in Buddhism and his zealous propagation of *dhamma* can be resolved by a proper understanding of the movements which were at work in the background, as also a critical examination of the evidence at our disposal.

French scholar E. Senart drew pointed attention to the striking parallelism between the ethical ideas of Aśokan edicts and those of the Buddhist *Dhammapada*.[43] He, however, misconceived that the edicts represent the entire picture of Buddhism, and what we to-day have as Buddhism is theological encrustation added afterwards. It is generally thought, that by the time of Aśoka, at least the *Vinaya*, first four *Nikāyas* of the *Sutta* and major portion of the fifth *Nikāya* had already been compiled; and it is that existent *Tripiṭaka* whose gleanings we find in the *dhamma* of Aśoka.[44] Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism, though was a result of the Kaliṅga

war, yet it was not the start of a process, rather a culmination of one which, probably, had its seeds growing right from the inception of the Mauryan dynasty. The history of Magadha, before the rise of the Mauryas, is full of contemptible bloodshed. The entire period of Magadhan imperialism, starting from the Haryaṅka dynasty, whose every ruler, perhaps, had been a parricide, and ending with the greedy Nandas of un-endearing disposition, must have produced an atmosphere of sincere disapproval and rejection of the ways of life existing. It is not surprising, if many people increasingly became interested in the ascetic ways of life, which seemed capable of providing comfort to those who were tired of the above state of affairs. It is interesting to note, that the philosophy of asceticism penetrated right into the Magadhan citadel and attracted the founder of the Mauryan empire himself, irrespective of the fact that he, largely, owed his kingship to the orthodox Brāhmin Kauṭilya, whose influence on him ought to have been irrevocable. It is reported, that Chandragupta became a Jaina in his later years and abdicated the throne. He, as a wandering ascetic, died through slow starvation.[45] Similarly, there is evidence to suggest Ājīvika influence in the court of Bindusāra, since it was a saint of that denomination who had predicted the future of Aśoka, when he was born.[46] It is probable, therefore, that the rulers of the Mauryan dynasty were increasingly getting attracted to ascetic movements and its culmination was reached at the end of Kaliṅga war, when Aśoka was converted to Buddhism to gradually emerge as its greatest patron. He was, at the same time, fully conscious of his duties as the ruler of a vast empire, and was capable of visualising the implications of a policy of forced conversions of the people, or its transmission to the people in its subtleties. It would have been rather naive on his part, if he had tried to propagate at the mass level the deeper doctrines of the religion, for which it was necessary to renounce the

household. Prime concern of Aśoka was mass welfare, the concept of welfare state having been already ushered in by the rise of the Mauryas to power. Idea of a warless state and its successful governance in accordance with that had already occurred to Buddha himself.[47] Aśoka had to combine the two fundamental and apparently apart duties; the first he owed to one, dependent to whom he must have considered himself, and the other to those, who were dependent on him for their well-being. In *dhamma* he found a happy compromise. It was through the medium of *dhamma* that he tried to propagate the basic principles of Buddhism in the masses, and it was also in conformity with the principles of *dhamma* that he ruled for the remaining part of his life. His edicts bear testimony to the fact that he strenuously practised the precepts which he laid down so eloquently in the records. Thus, it was in a simple and unaggreessive manner that Aśoka strove to spread the doctrine of the Buddha and establish the regime of morality.

It is curious that nothing, distinctively, Buddhistic has been found in his *dhamma*. On the contrary, there seems to be very little which may be said to be non-Buddhistic. It consisted of (i) *sādhave* or *bahu kayāne*, much good (ii) *ap-āsinave*, freedom from depravity, (iii) *dayā*, mercy, (iv) *dāna*, liberality, (v) *sache*, truthfulness, (vi) *sachaye*, purity and (vii) *mādave*, gentleness[48] D.R. Bhandarkar points out, that most of these virtues occur in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*[49]. Resemblance in the contents of R.E.IX and *Sigālovāda Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* has also been noted.[50] Besides, Aśoka's edicts are not only full of Buddhist terms but they have, at times, borrowed ideas verbatim. In the R.E. VIII, Aśoka says that there is no such country where do not live communities like the Brāhmaṇas and *Śramaṇas*, except that of the Yavanas. This is rather a literal restatement of what has already been said in early Buddhist literature.[51] Aśoka, as noted above, clearly mentions that his zeal for *dhamma* was a direct outcome of his association with the

saṅgha. The process of the spread of Buddhism, in and outside India, suddenly gets a fillip in the 3rd century BC, which has to be associated with the activities of Aśoka. Moreover, if the *dhamma* of the edicts was something other than Buddhism, why does Aśoka receive repeated adoration in the Buddhist works?

The distribution of Aśokan inscriptions reveals an interesting fact. Of all his edicts almost half, that is, as many as 17 form the category of Minor Rock Edicts. Out of the above, ten have been found from present Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, which formed the distant-most parts of his empire in the south. Out of the remaining seven only two have come from places close to the centre of the empire, viz. Sahasrām (Bihar) and Ahraurā (U.P.), while the rest have been found from places in Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh.[52] It is significant to note that, unlike other edicts, the Minor Rock Edict starts with his acceptance of the Buddhist faith in unequivocal terms. It is then followed by the reference to *dhamma*, giving an idea of its nature and the practical ways in which it could be put into practice.[53] Contrary to others, the Minor Rock Edict gives an expression to a certain amount of hesitation, as to whether the readers or listeners of the edict will fully understand what the author wants of them.[54] It tempts us to deduce, that while the people living in regions close to Magadha were presupposed to know the Buddhist faith of Aśoka and the mission behind the spread of Buddhism implied in the propagation of *dhamma*, the people in the south, as also other far off places required some explanation before they could be instructed about the *dhamma*. Had it not been so intended, we would have come across in the south also some more copies of the Major Rock Edicts and not a fresh set of edicts called the Minor Rock Edicts.

Scholars, who have held the view that *dhamma* was the essence of all religions and secular in nature[55] have argued that the concept of *apāsinava*, which is a basic principle of

Aśoka's *dhamma*, is wanting in the Buddhist literature but is available in the Jaina thought, though not in the same form. A second point of borrowing from the Jaina thought has been cited in the mention of the terms like *jīva*, *pāṇa*, *bhūta* and *jāta*. It is conceded, however, that it might have been another point of convenience for Aśoka to simplify the ideal by bringing in some outside concepts.[56] It was nothing new, since Buddha's own source in some of his ethical ideas appears to be Jainism. For example, four restrictions in use of water, a specially Jainist austerity, was imposed to avoid injuring the *sattas* or living souls, there might be in it. For these the Buddha substituted a fourfold watch of the four precepts against taking life, stealing, inchastity and lying.[57] Besides, the Jaina and the Buddhist movements had stemmed out of the same source i.e., the *Śramaṇa* stream of thought. It has been difficult to reconcile the Buddhist faith of Aśoka with the very universal *dhamma* of his edicts on account of the fact, that the problem has been approached through certain preconceived notions. The most common and, at the same time, the most erroneous of these lies in an attempt to discover the crystallised doctrines of an institutionalised Buddhist thought in the *dhamma* of Aśoka. The enigma can be unravelled only if the *dhamma* is to be studied in the context of the original teaching of the Buddha, which is devoid of any institutionalised ideas.

Buddha deviates and distinguishes himself from his forerunners, as well as contemporary thinkers, in so far as, his teaching does not encourage the metaphysical hankering for the conceptualisation of the transcendent, nor the fear of some supernatural being, who may be supposed to be the cause and controller of all things. The Buddha intended to inspire men with enthusiasm and fervour to seek that, which may be held as the ideal which places before them the highest idea of perfection and lifts them above the level of ordinary goodness and produces a yearning after a higher and better life. His teaching avoids all hypotheses regarding

the unknown and concerns itself only with the facts of life in the present work-a-day world, and seeks to transmute it by a moral and spiritual alchemy. Buddhism has always been marked by its intensely practical attitude. Brushing aside ritualism, theology and metaphysics, Buddha shifted emphasis in religion once and for all to man's inner life and he had a system of thought as to the means by which this inner life could be purified and its powers cultivated so that it would be immune from all *dukkha*, from all sorrows that outer life, the life of flesh and the world, inflict upon it.

Buddha repeatedly expresses himself against dogma. He holds that dogma does not make men pure nor does it end the ill existing in the world. It is the Path that brings purity. He declares in the *Aṭṭhaka Vagg*a of the *Sutta-nipāta*: 'I preach no dogmas drawn from all the diverse views'.[58] He is reported to have once told a Brāhmin, 'There are, O Brāhmin, many *Śramaṇas* and Brāhmaṇas that maintain that night is day and day is night. But I maintain that night is night and day is day.' Theories, he supposed, bring controversies and strife amongst the saints and thinkers but it does not harm those who have withdrawn from the world and have been cleansed.[59] Buddha's aversion for theories is asserted in very clear terms in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Vacchagotta is said to have asked him: 'But has Gotama any theory of his own'? The Lord answered: "The Tathāgata, O Vaccha, is free from all theories'.[60] There are other similar references in the *Nikāyas* to show that the Buddha vehemently condemned speculative views, i.e. dogmatism. For instance, in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, while dealing with indeterminate questions, he said, the Tathāgata does not indulge in such unwarranted extensions; he does not spin speculative theories.[61] Buddha's disapproval of dogmas appears to have been inspired by the perception of the fact that the Truth is essentially one and surpasses the intellect. Besides, dogmas and theories are bound to be accompanied by wrangles and strife. The wise, therefore, do not engage themselves in vulgar theories.[62]

There is a group of questions on which the Buddha expressed no opinion, viz. the ten *avyakatāni,* i.e. points not determined.[63] When he was asked to explain the cause of his silence over those questions, he pointed out that they were not only non-conducive to enlightenment,[64] but on the contrary, they were potent with the possibilities of anguish and misery.[65] Speculation on matters irrelevant to salvation is discouraged throughout his discourses.The starting point of Buddha is the universal suffering, i.e. not merely the suffering of the poor and wretched but also of those who live in the lap of luxury. If a man were struck by an arrow, he would not refuse to have it extricated before he knew who shot the arrow, whether that man was married or not, tall or small, fair or dark. All he would want, would be, to be rid of the arrow.[66]

The *dhamma* which flashed upon Siddhārtha Gautama at the time of his enlightenment (*saṁbodhi*), consisted of *pratītyasamutpāda* and Nirvāṇa.[67] The principle of *pratītyasamutpāda* has been called the 'middle way' and its discovery has been likened to that of an ancient city. In the *Jātakas* also, the *dhamma* has been characterised as the 'good old rule' (*carito purāṇo, dhammo sanātano, cirakālappavatto sabhāvo, poraniyāpakati*). The comparison is remarkable, since it points out Buddha's impersonal attitude towards his *dhamma.* Unlike the Vedic seers, Christianity and Islam, Buddha did not consider the *dhamma* to have been revealed to him by some supramundane power, rather he took it as an ancient highway of higher life continuing from the hoary past. That there was nothing obscurantist in the teaching of Buddha is amply clear from one of his statements made in his last moments. He is said to have told Ānanda: 'I have preached the Truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine, for in respect of *dhamma,* Tathāgata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who holds something back.[68]

Centuries later, the Mādhyamikas are said to preserve, faithfully, the basic features of the original teaching of the Buddha, although a subtle philosophical tinge has been added to it. The Mādhyamika standpoint of criticism and rejection of all theory as constituting the highest wisdom is in fullest accord with Buddha's rejection of all speculative philosophies as dogmatism (*diṭṭhi or diṭṭhigatānimani*). The rejection of theories is itself the means by which the Buddha is led to the non-conceptual knowledge of the absolute.[69] He is supposed to have specified four possible '*siddhāntas*', i.e. standpoints for knowing anything, viz. (i) *laukika siddhānta,* (ii) *pratipauriṣika siddhānta,* (iii) *pratipākṣika siddhānta* and (iv) *pāramārthika siddhānta.* While explaining the *pāramārthika siddhānta,* i.e. transcendental standpoint, comparison has been drawn in three verses of the *Arthavargīya Sūtra* and five verses of the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga* of the *Sutta-nipāta.*[70] The central idea of these verses is that a view is plausible because we prize it and we are enamoured of its externals. We hold fast to it as the truth and consider others as fools. This is actually the start of dogmatism and Mādhyamikas make it a point to give a severe blow to all such dogmatisation and theorising tendency on the basis of their dialectic. The Mādhyamikas use only one weapon. By drawing out the implications of any view, they show its self-contradictory character. The dialectic removes the constrictions which our concepts, with their practical or sentimental bias, put on reality. The Mādhyamika dialectic, however, was vigorously criticised and it was pointed out that *śūnyatā* which criticises all theories is but another theory. Equally prompt reply came from the Mādhyamikas and they observed, '*śūnyatā* (the awareness of the hollowness) of all views is preached by the Jinas (Buddhas) as the way of deliverance; incurable, indeed, are they who take *śūnyatā* itself as a view.'[71]

Aśoka's *dhamma* is, remarkably, in keeping with basic notes

of Buddha's teaching. Characterising feature of the *dhamma* is its popular non-scholastic and non-doctrinal conception. People were attracted to it because of its non-sectarian spirit. Aśoka, in consonance with Buddha's tone, has eschewed all matters of theology and speculative philosophy and has nowhere intended to thrust his religious conviction on others. He is concerned with the same practical aspects of life which had once struck the Buddha, i.e. what is proper for man to do, which leads to much good, and ultimately brings about unbounded joy and happiness and elevation of human nature.[72] Obviously, Aśoka's ordinances inscribed on rocks and pillars have more an ethical than doctrinal air and the ideas contained in them are far more concerned with the promotion of civic life, its virtues and values, than the publication of tenets, which had begun to be dogmatised to an extent. Nevertheless, contemporary state of affairs in the Buddhist order appears to have bewildered him utterly. Beside reiterating Buddha's instruction for active co-operation (*samavāya*) among all sects for their growth in essential matters,[73] he undertook practical measures for the repression of schism in the order.[74] He wanted the different sects and their exponents to come together for frank and free interchange of their thoughts and ideas in a mutually helping spirit. He desired the initial concord of the Buddhist order to be re-established. Aśoka's activities represent, beyond doubt, that he was a devout exponent of strenuous life for wholesome deeds. Imbued with remarkable practical sense and dynamism, Aśoka displayed in his personal life the spirit of Buddha's teaching at its best.

It is also observed that Aśoka's concern about the purgation of heresies from the *saṅgha*, described in the legends of the third Buddhist council, does not seem to fit in well with this popular and non-scholastic conception of his *dhamma*.[75] This observation necessitates a short survey of the genesis and transaction of this council, the facts of which,

in fact, appear to be supporting the foregone discussion on the subject. The *Aṭṭhakathās* (i.e. *Samantapāsādikā* and *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*) the Sri Lankan chronicles (i.e. *Dīpavaṁsa* and *Mahāvaṁsa*) discuss the third council in a closely resembling perspective. Its omission in the northern texts combined with the absence of any clear reference in the edicts of Aśoka has led some scholars to doubt its historicity.[76] It has also been suggested that the council might have met only after Aśoka had published the last set of 'Seven Pillar Edicts', that is to say, in between BC 242 and 231.[77] This appears to be a far fetched conclusion for, though there is no clear mention of the council in Aśokan inscriptions, allusion to some council certainly peeps through the Sārnāth, Sāñchī, Bairāṭ and some other inscriptions. Besides, Vasumitra also accounts for a council, which according to him, was held at Pāṭaliputra in the time of Aśoka, and where five points of Mahādeva were discussed. It is, however, clear that Vasumitra has mixed the details of the second and the third councils.[78] According to Hiuen Tsang, Aśoka organised a council which was represented by five hundred *theras* and five hundred opponent monks under Mahādeva. At another place, he informs us about the '*mahāsaṅgha*', i.e. the greater council conducted by ten thousand monks, who had been expelled from the council of Kāśyapa.[79] The *Dīpavaṁsa* also alludes to a similar council. The points raised by Mahādeva conceive the fallibility of Arhats and the nature of this controversy was evidently doctrinal. It has been pointed out that Mahādeva raised his points about half a century after the second council. In the light of the *Vinaya* evidence, the rise of the first schism, as well as, the emergence of the Mahāsaṅghikas has to be ascribed to a period after the second council, for the *Vinaya* texts, which inform us about the occasion and occupation of the first two councils, have nothing to say either about any schism, as such, or the division of the Buddhist order. Thus, holding of the *mahāsaṅgha*,

some fifty years after the council of Vaiśālī, need not be discounted as fiction. It may be added that the five points of Mahādeva have been discussed in the *Kathāvatthu.*[80] If, those points had caused the second synod, they ought to have been decided and not left for another occasion.

According to the accounts of the second council, the eastern monks, especially that of Vaiśālī, had started harbouring liberal attitude with regard to the *Vinaya* rules, the recognition for which was refused by other monks. Disappointed thus, the liberal section was likely to start drifting away from the conservative group and their orthodox tradition. In Mahādeva they seem to have found an able champion of their viewpoint, which had, by now, included doctrinal issues also. As a rebuff, the liberal section appears to have started its campaign by calling in question the authority of the Arhats themselves. In order to assert their independence, it is not unlikely that they should have called a *mahāsaṅgiti* at Pāṭaliputra, where they appear to have upheld their innovations with regard to the *Vinaya* and the *Dhamma*, and, thus, became known as Mahāsaṅghikas. The division of the Buddhist order in the Mahāsaṅghika and the Theravāda schools was, completed. Once the process of dissension and division was set moving, it could not be redeemed unless the *saṅgha* became divided into eighteen sects between the second and third councils.

The accounts of the third council, as given below, show that there were two aspects of its deliberations. Primarily, it was devoted to resolve the *Vinaya* dispute and retrieve the *uposatha* ceremony by purging the order of the non-Buddhists, who had joined it only for the sake of gain. The second phase of the council seems to have been utilised for an assertion of the authenticity of the Theravāda-Vibhajjavāda standpoint over other sects. The doctrinal preoccupation of the council is attested by its final outcome, i.e. the compilation of the *Kathāvatthu.* In spite of Aśoka's

comparative silence, the literary account of the council holds him substantially responsible in its organisation. The details of the council point towards a general and non-sectarian start. Aśoka's earnest desire for the repression of schismatic tendencies and unification of the order must have prompted him to grant formal support for its organisation. It is also possible that he might have graced the meeting by visiting and addressing it, as is indicated by his edicts. Once the non-conformists or schismatics (*bhinnavādins*) were exposed, the normal life of the monastery at Pāṭaliputra was restored. It was in this background that Aśoka claimed the success of restoring the unity and integrity of the *saṅgha* on a stable footing for all times to come. The Vibhajjavādins, being in the majority and claiming to be the true orthodox Buddhists, became predominant and their views appear to have prevailed during the subsequent course of the events.

Viewed thus, the *dhamma* of Aśoka appears inseparable from Buddhism, and the two must be held, basically, identical. This suggestion made earlier, and found defective in the light of Buddhism as then understood, will bear resuscitation if we only reinterpret the nature of original Buddhism as brought out by later researches.[81] We have to remember that the absence of metaphysical doctrines in original Buddhist *dhamma* was due to a very metaphysical realisation of the inadequacy of all metaphysics, and the acceptance of this insight may be held to be the reason of Aśoka's exclusive emphasis on practical and ethical attitudes. Aśoka's *dhamma* is non-sectarian and universal, because original Buddhism was non-sectarian and universal. Following in the footsteps of the Buddha, Aśoka made every endeavour to propagate among the millions of housemen and women in his empire and outside a simple religion of morality, love and philanthropy, seeking to bring about a moral revolution in the world through its diffusion.

Aśoka is, undoubtedly, one of the brightest personalities in the firmament of history. H.G. Wells, an eminent historian of modern times, says of the Buddhist emperor that 'amidst the tens and thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Aśoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star.'[82] One measure of evaluating the importance of Aśoka is the frequency with which he has been compared to a number of well-known rulers and leaders of men, who in different ways, have achieved fame, such as, Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Constantine, Charlemagne, St. Paul, Marcus Aurelius, Khalifa Omar, Akbar, Cromwell and Napoleon. But the singularity of his greatness is evident by itself, without inapt comparisons. The ideals and achievements of the celebrated Mauryan emperor make him a unique figure in the annals of illustrious monarchs. In the hour of victory his renunciation of war forever and adoption of the positive ideal of *dhamma-vijaya*, enunciating promotion of moral virtues in his empire and outside, hardly has a parallel elsewhere. The Buddhist emperor felt that he was concerned not merely with his own subjects but the whole of mankind, not again simply with mankind, but with the entire animate world. In R.E. VI he says; 'There is no higher duty than the welfare of the whole world. And what little effort I make is in order that I may be free from debt to the creatures, that I may render them happy here and they may gain heaven in the next world.'[83] Aśoka is clearly aspiring here to be a *chakravartin dhārmika dharmarājā*, defined in a Buddhist *Pāli-sutta* as conquering 'this earth to its ocean bounds, not by the chastising rod, not by the sword, but by righteousness *(dhamma)* and living supreme over it.'[84] The real import of the Buddhist ideal, as the supreme ruler of the earth, not by physical might but by moral and spiritual power was sought to be realised by Aśoka. Already the most powerful monarch

in the contemporary world, he felt inspired to be the ruler of a spiritual empire which embraced all humanity. That he did not, perhaps, overrate himself may be seen from the fact that the *Divyāvadāna* actually styles him *caturbhāga-cakravartī dhārmiko dharmarājo.*[85]

Aśoka made selections out of the then known corpus of Buddha's teachings and presented them in the principles of *dhamma*, on his own authority, in a form that could have an appeal at the popular level. In a way, he assumed the role of the founder of a spiritual movement seeking to establish a social order with piety as its means and the attainment of *svarga* or happiness in the other world as its end. The prospect that he envisaged for the people at large is not the attainment of Nirvāṇa or *saṁbodhi* but that of the *svarga* and of mingling with the *devas. Svarga* could be attained and the gods could be approached by every body, high or low, if only one exerted with zeal *(parākrama)*. Aśoka's own transformation as a devotee of the cult of *ahiṁsā* (non-violence) and his steadfast commitment to humanitarian services brought about a great change in the internal and external policies of the state. He introduced necessary changes in the administrative system to suit the propagation of *dhamma* or the law of piety in relation to the Buddhists, as well as non-Buddhists. In his famous pronouncement after the Kaliṅga war, he made the fervent declaration that henceforth instead of *bherī-ghoṣa*, the sound of war-drum, the people will hear *dhamma-ghoṣa*, the sound of the drum of law of piety. Not only did he himself adhere to this vow in the rest of his life, he enjoined that it should be followed by his sons and grandsons also.[86] In his view, the best conquest is the conquest of right not of might.[87] The enactment of various provision of *dhamma,* the promulgation of ordinances and the like were all measures devised to fulfil the duties of the ideal state as contemplated by him. He laid great emphasis upon the paternal principle of government

in the edicts. 'All men are my children; and just as I desire for my children that they may enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness, both in this world and the next, so also do I desire the same for all men.'[88] He wants the newly-conquered Kaliṅgas to grasp the truth that 'the king is to us as a father; he loves us even as he loves his children.'[89] However, this abiding sense of parental responsibility did not rest with the king alone. It belonged also to the class of officials called *rājukas* to whom he committed the care of his people. He states: 'Just as (a person), having made over his child to a skilful or wise nurse feels confident (with the idea) that the skilful nurse will easily be able to protect my child, thus (with such an idea) my *rājukas* have been appointed for the welfare and happiness of my country people.[90] Aśoka aspired to be the servant of the country *(desāvutika hosāmī)*.[91] He elaborates his theory of kingship further, by proclaiming; 'And whatever work I take up to do-and why? is for the reason that I may discharge my debts to all living beings, so that I may make them happy in this world and that (they) may win heaven in the world hereafter.'[92] His attention was drawn, especially, to the needy, the aged, the destitute, the sick, the slaves and servants, the imprisoned and those sentenced to death.[93] He was ready to attend to the business of the state at all times.[94] He takes pride in the social service which he has started, including free medical aid to the people and the building of watering and resting places along the roads to make travel less arduous. Beasts, birds, fishes and other animals also engaged his attention for whose benefit shaded trees were planted, tanks and wells were dug. He minimised slaughter of animals for food[95] and prohibited animal sacrifice.[96] It seems that the emperor, occasionally, went on inspection tours to oversee the state of administrative affairs,[97] though owing to the difficulties of communication in those early days, his movements must have been restricted.

He introduced some progressive reforms in the judicial

system, such as, improvement of jail administration and humanisation of ruthless criminal laws.[98] *Dhamma-mahāmātras,* a special class of officers, appointed by him in the thirteenth year after his coronation, were required to discharge an important judicial function, beside their chief duties, e.g. promulgating and promoting the principle of *dhamma,* superintending charities and promoting the interests of various religious groups, '*Saṅgha,* Brāhmaṇa, Nigaṅṭha, Ājīvika and whatever other *pāsaṇḍas* there are.' Their judicial function was related 'with (money) grants to and unfettering of the release of (anyone) who is bound with fetters according as he is encumbered with progeny, is beguiled or is aged.'[99] Although death penalty was not abolished for practical reasons, but to the condemned persons he granted the respite of three days to enable them to put their affairs in order and to prepare themselves for the next world.[100] Aśoka's Rock Edit XIII reveals that *āṭavikas* or tribesmen of the forest principalities were a constant source of danger to other people of the empire and earlier kings seem to have kept them under check by force. But he even reasons with them and seeks to reform them. He, however, warns them that, notwithstanding his intention to conciliate and educate them, he is possessed of all physical power to suppress them if their menace is not contained by peaceful means.[101] He desired that Brāhmaṇas and *Śramaṇas* should dwell everywhere in his empire without any fear or apprehension. He declares that he 'does reverence *(pūjā)* to men of all sects *(pāsaṇḍāni),* whether ascetics *(pavajitāni)* or householders *(gharastāni)* by gifts and various forms of reverence.'[102]

Soon after his conversion, Aśoka turned his thoughts to the spread of the faith he now professed, not only throughout his own empire but also to the regions outside the empire. He was, undoubtedly, one of the greatest missionaries the world has ever known. Aśoka organised sets of missions for

preaching Buddhism in different directions. His urge for the spread of Buddhist ideas was in full accord with Buddha's exhortation to his first disciples and the first missionaries to traverse the far corners of the earth 'for the happiness and welfare of mankind'.[103] The details of his missionary and philanthropic activities are recounted in his Rock Edicts II, V and XIII.[104] Bands of missionaries were, in fact, dispatched to different parts of three continents –Western Asia, including Syria; Eastern Europe, including Macedonia and the Epirus; and North Africa, including Egypt and Cyrene, as also places nearer home – the Tamil lands in south India, Sri Lanka, the regions in the foothills of the Himalayas and the extreme north-west. According to the *Pāli* traditional accounts, the most successful of his missions was that which established the Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka, from where it spread to other regions of South and South-East Asia.

In the Thirteenth Rock Edict he talks of his victories through *dhamma* and claims that he has won such victories far beyond the geographical frontiers of his own empire, in the lands of the south as far as Tāṁbapaṇṇi (Sri Lanka) and even in the realm of the Greek king Antiochus, and beyond that Antiochus among the four kings Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander.'[105] This list covers almost the entire contemporary Hellenistic world, and probably reflects one or more missions sent by Aśoka to the five Greek principalities. He was, thus, trying through his policy of moral conquest to gain the leadership of the entire civilised world, as he knew it. Already the most powerful monarch in the contemporary world he felt himself to be the ruler of a spiritual empire, which embraced all humanity. He, therefore, makes the declaration 'all men are my progeny.' At no other point of time in her long history did India enjoy such prestige in the comity of nations as under the benevolent Aśoka, 'philosopher king' of India. As no mention of Aśoka's embassies of *dhamma* have been found

in any Greek or Latin sources, it is observed that if they at all reached their destination, they made little impression on the ambitious Hellenistic rulers of the West.[106] The Greek and Latin sources may not have recorded the arrival of Aśoka's missions, but there is reason to believe that the Buddhist principles exercised some influence not only on the Jewish sects of the Therapeutae and Essenes but also on Christianity of the early period, as well as of the Middle Ages.[107] Further, it may be added that his missionary enterprises in the West Asian kingdoms have to be considered in the background of friendly relations which had been cultivated since the time of his grandfather Chandragupta, and subsequently nurtured by his father Bindusāra. What is important to underline, is the fact that by assisting Buddhism, yet restricted to a small area of north-east India, to become a world religion, Aśoka inaugurated an era of cultural movement which has exercised a profound influence on the subsequent course of history of a large part of Asia. It was in the universalisation of the Buddhist ideas and culture in the lives of the people, in areas far and wide, that made him unique among the great rulers of the world. The propagation of Buddhist culture in a simplified and humanised form was his mission and that it could be adopted by all people without any distinctions of caste, creed and colour was his conviction. Aśoka himself believed firmly that his exertions would mark a turning point in history, which in a sense they did. They would last, he expresses the hope, for as long 'as the moon and the sun.' Indian tradition has fondly cherished the memory of Aśoka by emphasising the ideal of a pan-Indian empire and more certainly the spirit of humanity permeating through his edicts. It was through this spirit that he sought to integrate emotionally his vast empire and its heterogeneous society.

According to the Buddhist texts, Aśoka ruled for twenty-seven years. Since his accession is supposed to have taken

place in c. 274–273 BC his reign may be taken to have come to an end in c. 247–246 BC But the most favoured date for his death is c. 234–233 BC assigning him a total reign period of forty years. This date depends on a complicated calculation based on the death of Buddha, which again is not quite certain. The *Mahāvaṁsa* describes the last days of Aśoka as unhappy and the *Divyāvadāna*[108] as both unhappy, and tragic. We gather from the *Aśokāvadāna* that towards the end of his reign he became so generous to the Buddhist order that the princes and ministers were alarmed at his extravagance to the extent that he was deprived of control of the treasury by a palace coup and forced into virtual retirement. Though all the details of the legend may not be true, but this much is evident from his edicts, engraved towards the closing years of his reign, that his interest in the Buddhist order intensified with advancing years. It seems that the state of disintegration of the Mauryan empire set in immediately after the passing away of Aśoka and the pace of dissolution was considerably fast. It has been observed that 'his sceptre was the bow of Ulysses, which could not be drawn by weaker hands.'

Very little authentic information is available about Aśoka's descendents who somehow managed to hold the throne of Pāṭaliputra up to 185 BC In view of the diverse lists of Aśoka's successors furnished by the *Purāṇas*, there is no unanimity regarding the order of succession or even in regard to the names of the successors. Only one of these names, that of Daśaratha, supposed to be the grandson of Aśoka, is known from epigraphic record. Inscriptions in the Nāgārjunī hills record gifts of caves to the Ājīvika monks by Daśaratha. Samprati, another grandson of Aśoka, who, perhaps, ascended the throne after Daśaratha is said to have been a great patron of Jainism. From whatever little information is available, it is clear that none of Aśoka's successors was able to exercise his hold over the undivided Mauryan empire

and it was split into a number of independent principalities, such as, Kashmir, Gandhara, Magadha, Ujjain, etc. According to the account of Bāṇabhatta,[109] the tenth and the last of the Mauryas, Bṛhadratha was treacherously assassinated. With the death of Bṛhadratha in c. 185 BC the illustrious house of the Mauryas, after a momentous reign of 137 years, passed into history.

NOTES

1. Cf. G.M.Bongard-Levin, *op.cit.* pp. 81-82; E. Ben Veniste, *Edicts d'Aśoka*; M.C. Joshi, J.C. Joshi, 'A study of the names of Aśoka', *Journal of Oriental Institute of Baroda,* Vol. XII, No. 4, 1968, pp. 415–21.
2. Cf. V. Smith, *op.cit.* pp. 16,41; Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* pp. 226–27; Patrick Olivelle, ed., *Asoka in History and Historical Memory,* pp. 19ff.
3. Aśoka means sorrowlessness, that is, joy and *vardhana* means increasing. On some aspects of Asokan Studies cf. Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *Historical Geography of Aśokan Edicts,* pp. 2ff.
4. *Mahāvaṁsa,* V. 19-20; *Mahāvaṁsa* V. 40, however, says that only one elder brother Sumana was killed.
5. *Vaṁsatthappakāsinī,* I, p. 228: *abhisekato pubbekatena ekunasatabhātughātakena lāmkakammunā Caṇḍāsoko ti ñāyitthā.*
6. *C.1.1.,* Vol.I. Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 8ff.
7. *Divyāvadāna,* Chap. xxvi, cf. John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka,* pp. 206ff.
8. *C.1.1.,* Vol.I. Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp.14ff.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 11ff.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 1ff.
11. D.R.Bhandarkar, *Aśoka,* pp. 18–19, 260, n-5.
12. *C.1.1.,* Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 22ff; cf. Meena Talim, *Edicts of King Asoka A New Vision,* pp. 55ff.
13. Cf. J.W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India,* p. 220.
14. *C.1.1.,* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch. pp. 92ff.
15. See I.K. Sarma and J. Varaprasad Rao, *op.cit.*, pp. 10ff.
16. *C.1.1.,* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 98ff.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 5ff.
18. On the basis of an account of the *Mahāvaṁsa* (Chap.V) some scholars have held the view that the conversion of Aśoka took place before the Kaliṅga war, cf. P.H.L Eggermont, *The Chronology of the Reign of Aśoka Moriya,* pp. 69ff. It would then be difficult to explain, as to why he

waged a war resulting into the killing of countless people including *Śramaṇas.*

19. *C.1.1.,* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 166ff.
20. H.C. Rajchaudhuri, *P.H.A.I.* p. 325 n.1.
21. *C.1.1.,* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 172ff.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 14.
23. *Ibid.,* p. 164.
24. *Mahāvaṁsa,* V. 37-48.
25. *Divyāvadāna,* p. 350.
26. *Rājatraringiṇī* I. 102.
27. *J.R.A.S.* (N.S) Vol. IX. pp. 155 and 187.
28. V.R.R. Dikshitar, *op.cit.,* p. 276.
29. *Cambridge History of India,* Vol. I, p. 455.
30. *J.R.A.S,* 1908, pp. 491–7.
31. J.M.Macphail, *Aśoka,* p. 48.
32. *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India,* p. 53; cf. *Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien.* VI. p. 28.
33. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* p. 148.
34. V.A. Smith, *Aśoka.* pp. 59–60.
35. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka,* p. 126.
36. V.A. Smith, *Aśoka,* pp. 29–30.
37. R.K. Mookerji, *Aśoka,* pp. 59, 68.
38. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśok*a, p. 116.
39. R.K. Mookerji, *Aśoka,* p. 77.
40. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka,* p. 97, 100, 102–03, 109–10, 122, cf. Irfan Habib & Vivekanand Jha, *Mauryan India,* Chapter, 2.2.
41. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* pp. 144ff.
42. J.M. Macphail, *op.cit.,* p. 93.
43. E. Senart, *Les Inscriptions de Piyadassi,* Vol. II, p. 322; *Indian Antiquary,* 1891, pp. 264–5.
44. G.C. Pande, *Bauddha Dharma Ke Vikasa Ka Itihasa,* p. 229.
45. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan,* VIII. 415ff.
46. *Divyāvadāna,* XXVI. pp. 370ff.
47. *Saṁyutta Nikāya,* (P.T.S.), I. pp. 145–46.
48. P.E. II and VII; See *C.1.1.,* Vol. I., Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 120ff.
49. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśok*a, p. 110.
50. RomilaThapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* p. 160.
51. *Majjhima Nikāya,* (P.T.S.), II. p. 341.
52. Richard Salomon, *op.cit.,* pp. 133ff.
53. M.R.E.I; See *C.1.1.,* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 166 ff.
54. Romila Thapar *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas,* p. 172.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
56. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka*, p. 119.
57. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, (P.T.S.), I, p. 91, n.
58. *Idaṁ vadamīti na tassa hoti dhammesu niccheyya sumaggahītaṁ, Sutta-nipāta* 4.9.3.
59. *Ibid.*, 4.8.1 ff.
60. *Atthi pana bho to Gotamassa kiṅci diṭṭhigataṁ ti? ditthigataṁ ti kho Vaccha apanītaṁ Tathāgatassa, Majjhima Nikāya,* IV, p. 179.
61. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, (P.T.S.), Vol. IV, pp. 395–99.
62. *Sutta-nipāta*, pp. 215–219.
63. Beside being often mentioned in the Dialogues they form the subject matter of the *Avyākta Samutta* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya.*
64. *Dīgha Nikāya*, (S.B.B.), Vol. I, pp. 254–55.
65. *Majihima Nikāya*,(P.T.S.), II, p. 63.
66. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 107–13.
67. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Vol. II, pp. 105-06.
68. *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, ii, 25.
69. T.R.V. Murti, *Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 49–52.
70. Etienne Lamotte, *Le Traité De La Grande Vertu De Sagesse De Nagarjuna*, I, pp. 27 H.
71. *Śunyatā sarva-dṛstīnāṁ proktaṁ nissarnaṁ jinaiḥ, Mādhyamaka Kārika* XIII. 8.
72. R.E. XIII, P.E.VII; cf. *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 22 ff.
73. R.E. XII; cf. *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch. pp. 20 ff.
74. Kauśāmbī, Sārnāth and Sāñchī Edicts; See *C.1.1.*, Vol I., Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 159 ff.
75. S.Dutt, *The Buddha and Five After Centuries*, p. 157.
76. V.A. Smith, *Early History of India,* p. 161, E.J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought*, p. 35, Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, p. 351.
77. A.H. Keane, *E.R.E.* (ii), p. 126; cf. *C.1.1.* Inscriptions of Aśoka, Alexander Cunningham, p. 3.
78. S.N. Dube, 'Religious conviction of Aśoka', *The University of Rajasthan Studies in History*, 1965-66, pp. 12ff; 'Delimitation of the Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism' *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences,' Journal of Inter University Centre*, I.I.A.S. Simla, Vol. X, No. 1. Summer 2003, pp. 35 ff.
79. S. Beal, *Hiuen Tsang*, 190, 380-81.
80. *Kathāvatthu*, II. 1. ff.
81. G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*; S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism.*
82. H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, p. 490.

83. *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p. 12.
84. *Dīgha Nikāya*, I, p. 77, II, p. 113.
85. Cf. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka,* pp. 206–7.
86. R.E.IV, XIII; See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 5-6.
87. R.E.XIII, See *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 22-23.
88. S.K.E.I, See *C.1.1.*, Vol I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 93 ff.
89. S.K.E.II, See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p. 98.
90. P.E.IV, See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 122-23.
91. S.K.E.II, See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p. 98.
92, R.E.VI, See *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p. 11.
93. R.E.II, IV, V; P.E.IV.V, See *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch pp. 2 ff.
94. R.E.VI, See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p. 11.
95. P.E.V, See *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 125-26.
96. R.E.I, See *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, p.1.
97. S.K.E.I, See *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch.
98. R.E.V; P.E.IV, See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 8-9, 122-23.
99. R.E.V; See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 8-9.
100. P.E.IV; See *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 122–23.
101. R.E.XIII (Shāhbāzgarhī and Mānsehrā), *C.1.1.*, Vol.I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 66 ff.
102. Cf. R.K. Mookerji, *Aśoka*, p. 65.
103. *Mahāvagga*, p. 23.
104. See. *C.1.1.*, Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 2ff.
105. See *C.1.1.,* Vol. I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, ed. E. Hultzsch, pp. 22–23.
106. A.L. Basham, "Emperor Aśoka", *Studies in Orientology*, ed. S.K. Maity *et. al.* p. 3.
107. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka*, p. 227.
108. Cf. *Divyāvadāna*, 429 ff.
109. *Harsacharita*, pp. 198–99.

VI

RISE AND RAMIFICATIONS OF EARLY BUDDHIST SECTS

According to the *Pāli* texts, the term by which the Buddha very often referred to his teachings was '*Dhamma-Vinaya*' generally understood as 'Doctrine and Discipline'. While the doctrinal teachings form part of the *Sutta Piṭaka* or collection of discourses, those having a bearing on matters of *Vinaya* are included in the *Vinaya-Piṭaka* or collection of disciplinary precepts for the followers. A remarkable practical achievement of Gautama Buddha was to found a religious order which has lasted to the present day. It is chiefly to this institution that the permanence of his religion is due.[1] Soon after Gautama had attained *bodhi* or illumination and become the Buddha, the enlightened one, disciples began to flock him. In a short period he was able to win many adherents. The story of the Buddhist *saṅgha* commences with the conversion of the so-called *Pañcavargīya bhikṣus*, the five first followers of the Buddha who had borne him company in the years of his asceticism. Next initiated into the *saṅgha* were Yaśa, the son of the *seṭṭhi* of Banāras, and his four friends, followed by fifty others.[2] Thus, with the 'turning of the wheel of law' at Iṣipatana (Sārnāth), that is, almost at the outset, the *saṅgha* began its career with sixty disciples including the beloved Ānanda, the companion of all his wanderings. He said to them one day, 'Go now and wander for the gain of many, for the welfare of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain and for the welfare of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way. Preach the

doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle and glorious in the end in the spirit and in the letter: proclaim a consumate, perfect and pure life of holiness.'[3] The Buddha himself is said to have returned to Uruvelā where he converted another thirty called *Bhadravargīyas*, and in addition, the enormous number of one hundred Jaṭila ascetics with their leaders, Uruvelakassapa, Nadīkassapa and Gayākassapa. At Rājagṛha, the Buddha attracted so many scions of aristocratic families that very soon he became an object of social resentment.[4] Besides, there were also a large number of lay-devotees who vied with each other in making gifts to the *saṅgha* and inviting its members to partake food. Inspired by the Buddha's exhortations his disciples actively propagated the *Dhamma*, so much so that it became impossible for him to perform personally the ordination of every new entrant and the power had to be vested in already ordained disciples.

The dissemination of *Dhamma* during the century after the Buddha's death led to an increase in the numbers of monks and its diffusion over a broader geographical area. Following the wide spread of the religion, rise in the membership of the *saṅgha*, change from peripatetic to monastic way of life of the *bhikṣus* and growing relations of the *saṅgha* with society at large, such new developments and complexities surfaced which had profound bearing on the course of its subsequent history. With the expansion of the *saṅgha*, councils claiming to be ecumenical were held from time to time. Along side its physical growth, the spirit of Buddhism was markedly liberal and democratic and its organisation highly decentralised. Buddha would not let his adherents refuse the burden of spiritual liberty. They must not abandon the search for truth by accepting an authority. They must be free men able to be a light and a help to themselves. Speaking to his disciple Ānanda, shortly before his passing away the Buddha said 'Be ye as those who have

the self as their light. Be ye as those who have the self as their refuge. Betake yourself to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as to a refuge.[5] Mental freedom is a flavour permeating Lord Buddha's teachings, which were far from being dogmatic. He offered his followers a scheme of spiritual development and not a set of doctrines, a way not a creed. He knew that the acceptance of a creed was generally an excuse for the abandonment of the search. His teachings require the putting aside of previous dogmas, opinions and biases for its aim is truth which cannot be realised by a coloured mind. With an open mind the Buddhist objectivity and rationality, looks into his situations taking as his guide the Buddha's injunction to the Kālāmas, an excellent affirmation of free thought.[6] In its long history Buddhism, therefore, never appears as something static. It began as a movement, which carried with it germs of growth and potencies of development. He refused to stifle criticism. Once he entered a public hall at Ambalaṭṭhikā and found some of his disciples talking of a Brāhmin who had just been accusing Gautama of impiety and finding fault with the order of mendicants he had founded. 'Brethren' said Gautama, 'if others speak against me, or against my religion, or against the order, there is no reason why you should be angry, discontented or displeased with them. If you are so, you will not only bring yourselves into danger of spiritual loss, but you will not be able to judge whether what they say is correct or not correct.' The Buddha thought of the world as ignorant rather than wicked, as unsatisfactory rather than rebellious. He allowed a certain amount of latitude in the observance of *Vinaya* rules, which was opposed by Devadatta who instead pleaded for the promulgation of five stringent rules. His last injunctions included a significant stipulation that after his demise the community (*saṅgha*), if it so desires, may abolish the more minor rules of training (*khuddakānukhuddakāni sikkhāpadāni*). A perusal of the

Vinaya shows that the older monastic rules were, in fact, often modified and altered; when necessary, also new rules were laid down. Above all, the Buddhist monastic procedures were conducted in a democratic way. If a particular dispute was not resolved in the routine way it was referred to a committee called *ubbāhikā* whose members were selected by the *saṅgha*. If the dispute was solved, it became then a closed issue, otherwise, it again came to the *saṅgha* to be decided by the majority opinion.[7] No procedure was regarded as valid unless all the members within the *sīmā* were present.

In the Buddhist texts the *saṅgha* is often referred to as the harmonious order (*samagra saṅgha*). It would, indeed, be a proud achievement for any religious teacher to get the kind of success which the Buddha had in organising the order. However, the consequences, with which a great institution like this normally suffers, became manifest in his own lifetime. The tendency of disruption entered the *saṅgha* and the Buddha had a bitter experience of one possible split arising from the confrontation between the two warring teachers of the monastery of Kauśāmbī, *viz.* Dhammadhara and Vinayadhara and their respective followers. The Buddha failed to resolve the controversy initially. It was only when he retired to the forest, saying that he would better like to be served by elephants than by those quarrelling monks and lay-devotees, that the disputing groups realised their mistake and effected a compromise.[8] From the *Saṅghabhedakhandhaka* of the *Cullavagga* we gather that another such exigency, in the lifetime of Buddha, was due to his own kinsman Devadatta, who succeeded in persuading a great number of his followers to side with him.[9] Ample opportunities existed for differences of interpretation to lead to disputes involving the *saṅgha* and instances of confrontation among monks on a certain issue were, thus, not very rare.[10] Buddhism being a dynamic and progressive

movement there were bound to be radical revolutions in Buddhist thought and organisation. As is common with a living spiritual movement, Buddhism diversified due to the variegated interpretations by its followers and quite early in its history there surfaced certain issues and ideas which were at first vague and nebulous but which sought to examine the entire conception of Buddhist thought based on its cardinal principles, such as, the personal status of the Tathāgatha and the interpretation of *pratītysamutpāda.* The later developments show that Buddhism never ceased to evolve and modify its standpoint throughout the centuries.

In the post-canonical *Pāli* commentatorial literature, as well as the Sri Lankan chronicles there is evidence to show that within a couple of centuries of Buddha's decease, the *saṅgha* was split into eighteen sects. As older works do not make a mention of these sects, scholars, like T.W. Rhys Davids, are led to observe that: Suddenly in the 4th and 5th centuries we have the famous lists of 18 sects supposed to have arisen and to have flourished before the canon was closed. If we take all the evidence together, it is possible to draw only one conclusion. There were no sects in India in any proper use of that term.... The number eighteen is fictitious and may very probably be derived from the eighteen causes of division set out in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya.*[11] Poussin has, similarly, observed that "the Buddhist schools work on a common literary stock made up from mutual borrowings and they arrive at divergent conclusions even when they do not start from divergent dogmatical tenets. As a rule doctrinal contradictions do not disrupt the *saṅgha.* Thus, if we consider the mutual relation of sects and their legal position as branches of the universal *saṅgha* leaving out of account doctrinal divergences which are not as such of paramount importance–sects are not to be contrasted as hostile body, with closed tradition."[12] Doubts expressed by scholars like T.W. Rhys Davids and L. de La Vallèe Poussin about the

historicity of early Buddhist sects seem to overlook direct epigraphic evidence, datable to early centuries of the Christian era, bearing on the subject and more indirect ones going back to the second century BC. In the Sāñchī relic casket inscription there is reference to Hemavatācariya Gotiputa Kassapa-gota.[13] It is probable that we have here a glimpse of the Haimavata and perhaps the Kāśyapīya sects of early Buddhism. Andrè Bareau has compiled a list of thirty-four sects from literary sources (northern and southern traditions) and from inscriptions recording gifts to various sects.[14] It is not strange that Yuan Chwang, while giving an account of the 7th century AD, should mention the names of only a few Buddhist sects, because the different sects, which are said to have arisen earlier, might afterwards have been either absorbed, one by the other, or some of them disappeared being unable to sustain themselves in opposition to rival sects. It may be added that texts of *Vinaya* and the *Sutta Piṭakas* are replete with terms and phrases which seem to imply an early tendency towards sectarian division in the order. It should also be remarked that there is common ground in the traditions of the different sects in holding that the differentiation of the sects had arisen early, mostly within the first two centuries of the Nirvāṇa era. C.A.F. Rhys Davids also calls the non-Theravāda schools dummies and observes that the ancient treatises on them by Bhavya, Vasumitra and Vinītadeva offer us only the dry disintegrated bones of doctrine. Yet the dummies appear to have been once alive and the dry bones clothed with flesh and blood. The records, doubtless, present a dry conspectus because they are the products of scholastic activity.

Elaborating upon the rise of various sects, the Sri Lankan chronicles, as also the *Aṭṭhakathās*, inform us that about 200 years after Buddha's demise a large number of pseudo-Buddhists entered the *saṅgha*. The result was that the *uposatha*, the oldest monastic ceremony of Buddhism, could

not be held for seven years in a row, as the so-called orthodox monks refused to perform it in the company of those whom they considered as heretics. The contemporary Mauryan emperor Aśoka is said to have deputed one of his ministers to persuade the monks of the monastery of Aśokārāma to resume the ceremony. The minister, however, miscarried the orders and beheaded several monks. Aśoka was shocked to hear it and remorsefully approached Moggaliputta Tissa, the senior-most monk for solace. The latter consoled Aśoka by assuaging his feelings that he had harboured no deliberate intention to have the monks beheaded. Thereafter, the *saṅgha* was purged jointly by Aśoka and Moggaliputta Tissa of all such elements who did not subscribe to the Theravāda (Sthaviravāda)–Vibhajjavāda viewpoint. After purging the order of unorthodox elements a council was held at Pāṭaliputra under the presidentship of Moggaliputta Tissa. The most significant outcome of the deliberations of this synod, known as the third council, was the compilation of *Kathāvatthu* with a view to refuting the doctrines of the non-Theravāda schools.[17] It was included in the canon among the *Abhidharma* treatises. Buddhaghoṣa, in discussing the authority of the *Kathāvatthu*, makes a statement in his *Aṭṭhasālinī* to the effect that the Buddha himself laid down the table of contents (*mātikā*) of the *Kathāvatthu*, and while doing it he foresaw that more than 218 years after his demise (*mamaparinibbānato aṭṭhārasavassā dhikānaṁ dvinnaṁ vassasatānaṁ matthake*), Tissa son of Moggali, being seated in the midst of one thousand *bhikṣus*, would elaborate the *Kathāvatthu* to the extent of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, bringing together 500 orthodox and 500 heterodox *suttas*. In a late Siṁhalese work, *viz.*, *Nikāya Saṅgraha*, we have the additional information that the monks who were expelled from the order of the *Theriya Nikāya* (Theravāda sect) became members of the non-Theravāda sects.[18] The Siṁhalese tradition further informs us that Moggaliputta

Tissa persuaded Aśoka to dispatch Buddhist missions after the conclusion of the council. Missionaries from the *saṅgha* were sent to nine different lands and regions: Sri Lanka, Gandhāra, the Greek people, Himavanta, Aparāntaka, Mahārāṣṭra, Vanavāsa and Suvarṇabhūmi. The literary tradition finds corroborative support from his inscriptions. In his RE XIII it is stated that he tried to spread the *Dhamma* not only in his territory (*vijita*) or among the people of the border lands (*aṁtas*) but also in far off kingdoms, such as, those of Antiochus (Aṁtiyoka) II, king of Syria, and the kingdoms of four other kings, still farther off, i.e. Ptolemy (Tulamāya) of Egypt, Antigonus (Aṁtekini) of Macedonia, Alexander (Alikasudara) of Epirus (in northern Greece) and Magas of Cyrene (in North Africa). He also mentions the Yavanas, Kambojas, Pāṇḍyas, Cholas, Āndhras, Siṁhala, etc. in this context. RE II tells us about his philanthropic activities in those distant countries and regions.

The historicity of the third council is now generally accepted by the scholars. Aśoka, it is true, does not directly refer to the council, yet some of his inscriptions appear to presuppose some such event. That Aśoka is not clearer over the council may be explained by the fact that he was not as intimately connected with the council as the *Pāli* tradition would have us believe.[19] Indeed, the historical perspective in which the *Kathāvatthu* is said to have been compiled seems also to be preserved in some of the edicts of Aśoka. He issued some interesting orders to his officers, which were engraved on pillars at three different places, Sārnāth, Sāñchī and Kauśāmbī. Through this edict he sought to preserve the unity of the Budhhist order by putting down all attempts tending to create schism. It lays down "... indeed, that monk or nun who shall break up the *saṅgha* be caused to put on white robes and reside in a non-residence."[20] The contents of the Sārnāth-Sāñchī-Kauśāmbī edict clearly reflect Aśoka's determination to eradicate division in the *saṅgha.* Aśoka is

so worried of the schismatics as to fear that having been removed from the *saṅgha*, they might win over some lay devotees; so he orders that a copy of the edict be placed in a manner as to be accessible to the laity who may come and see it on every fast day. The Sāñchī edict sums up the wish of Aśoka in all these efforts which is that the *saṅgha* should be united and lasting ("*Ichā hime kiṁti saṅgha samaga cilithitīka siyāti*"). The earnest, almost severe tone of the edict and the fact that its copies are found at places of important Buddhist monastic establishments, presuppose that in his time the Buddhist order was at least threatened with disruption, to prevent which he was straining every nerve. There is no inherent implausibility, thus, in the traditional assumption, that, by the time the canon came to be closed, various sects arose and provided an occasion for compilation of the *Kathāvatthu*, fifth of the seven books that form the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*.

The evidence gleaned from the above Aśokan edict also helps in the dating of the *Kathāvatthu*. Firstly it may not be a mere coincidence that the punishment prescribed by Aśoka to schismatics is the same as was given to such elements in the third council, *i.e.*, depriving them of the yellow robe and expelling them from the *saṅgha*. Such an extreme step, on the part of Aśoka, would presuppose an already set practice in the *saṅgha*. Secondly, the edict was issued only after the convention of the council, i.e. after the seventeenth regnal year of Aśoka. Scholars have ascribed it to a period between the twenty-ninth and thirty-eighth regnal years.[21] Now, the keenness of Aśoka to check the schismatic tendencies during this period becomes understandable if we suppose that although schismatic sects had been expelled at the time of the third council, there was still some apprehension that they might threaten the unity of the *saṅgha*. Moreover, what was the authority to guide in ascertaining whether any particular monk or nun was

creating schism in the *saṅgha*? It may be suggested that the guiding authority perhaps lay in a canonical text, such as, the *Kathāvatthu*, which tradition reports to have been compiled at the time of the third council and which refutes all those views which were heretical and schismatic. The task of the *Kathāvatthu* being mainly to discuss the various theses put forward by the opponents of the Theravāda school, and to refute each of them from the latter's point of view, makes it obvious that its objective was the same as that of the Sārnāth-Sāñchī-Kauśāmbī edict, i.e. to put an end to the disruptive elements which posed a serious threat to the orthodox school and its viewpoint. Taking into account the common object of the two writings, viz. schism edict and the *Kathāvatthu* it is not unlikely that they may have been products of the same age.[22] It may be noted that the hypothesis of the *Kathāvatthu* having been compiled during the time of Aśoka is also indicated by the suggestion that this text seems to have influenced the Aśokan Rock Edict IX.[23]

Thus, *Kathāvatthu*, the only book in the *Pāli Tripiṭaka* of which we know the date and authorship, is the leading document of this age, an age when repeated schisms had rent the original unity of Buddhism and produced an atmosphere seething with many-sided reflections, doctrinal debates and controversies. It presents a broad cross section of Buddhist thought in an age of critical transition when some of the conflicts and obscurities latent in the earlier doctrines emerged openly and when in the course of their discussion ground was prepared for future development. It is, in fact, a polemical text, consisting of the refutation in strict logical form of more than two hundred propositions maintained by different early Buddhist sects, other than the Theravāda. It presents a watershed in the development of Buddhist thought. Before the emergence of the controversies, recorded in this text, Buddhism still

presented, more or less, an ecumenical aspect, but not long afterwards beginnings of the Mahāyāna are clearly traceable. The *Kathāvatthu* is a *magnum opus*, therefore, for any reconstruction of the history of early Buddhism, especially for understanding the figurative transition from the earlier historical forms to the later developed systems.

The evolution of Buddhist thought in India may be understood in two broad phases – original Buddhism and scholastic Buddhism, with three sub-phases in the latter, viz. (i) *Abhidhamma*, (ii) Mahāyāna and (iii) Buddhism after Diṅnāga. It is the original doctrine of the Buddha, however, which is the fountainhead of all the later thought.[24] The *Abhidhamma* seems to have developed from the *mātikās*[25] and the beginnings of analysis. Later Buddhist traditions inform us that the Buddha had turned the wheel of the law thrice, first at Banāras, next at Gṛdhrakūṭa and finally at Dhānyakaṭaka.[26] According to these traditions, the *Prajñāpāramitāśāstra* and Vajrayāna doctrines were preached respectively at Gṛdhrakūṭa and Dhānyakaṭaka. This is more an esoteric than a historical tradition, but there have always been some claimants for whom such intimations are at times revealed in spiritual and mystical experiences.[27] It seems that it is the Mādhyamika scholars who have discovered the true perspective in which to understand the Buddha's teaching. According to them, the Buddha had discoursed on two truths - the empirical and the ultimate or *saṁvṛti satya* and *paramārtha satya*. While the *paramārtha* is the ultimate objective, the former is the way or means for its realisation. It is granted even by the *Pāli* tradition that the Buddha's teaching differed according to the intellectual level of his listeners.[28] While the traditional account of differentiation of Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna appeals to a common original inspiration, the emergence of the eighteen Hīnayāna sects is attributed by the tradition itself to the labours of individual monks.

A complex of many factors, however, appears to underlie the latter development of which the *Kathāvatthu* presents a final conspectus. There is a group of problems over which the Buddha refrained from expressing any opinion, viz. ten indeterminate (*avyākṛta*) points.[29] When he was asked to explain his silence over those issues, he pointed out that they were not only non-conducive to enlightenment, but were potent with the possibilities of anguish and misery. The silence of the Buddha has puzzled modern scholars and led some to call him an agnostic.[30] It must have appeared equally enigmatic to the early interpreters and may have led them to various interpretations. We know that the Buddha had laid down, as a basic tenet, through his doctrines of *anatta* and *anicca*, the unsubstantial and transitory nature of all things. Nevertheless, there emerged in Buddhism sects like Pudgalavādins and Sarvāstivādins. Since some of the indeterminate points were of fundamental import they were quite likely to capture the imagination of philosophically minded Buddhists, and more so after the Master had passed away. The Buddha insisted that his teachings ought to be thoroughly analysed and understood before they were accepted.[31] There were attempts at systematising his teachings and the very first such effort was made immediately after his passing away in the first council, the details of which are embedded in discordant notes stuck by seṇior monks like Subhadda and Purāṇa. Later the Mahāsaṅghikas were impeached by the Theravādins for their innovative rules of monkish conduct. We also notice that some early Buddhist sects compiled their own individual *Vinaya* as also other works.[32] The brevity, as also the variety of the Buddha's sermons, opened avenues for interpretation and development in the course of their analysis and systematisation.

Another factor leading to differences was the scholastic specialisation among the monks. As was the case with the

Vedic literature, early Buddhists also relied on memory and recitation for preserving the words of the Buddha. This made it necessary for different groups of monks to specialise in specific fields of Buddhist studies, a process which was helped further by the growth of particular traditions. In the *Pāli* canon we come across such classes of monks as *Dhammadharas*, *Vinayadharas*, *Mātikādharas*, *Dhammakaṭhikas*, *Dīghabhānakas*, *Majjhimabhānkas*, *Abhidhammikas,* etc.[33] We find mention of differences between *Dhammadhara* and *Vinayadhara* monks of Kauśāmbī assuming sectarian proportions even during the lifetime of Buddha. It is likely that these separate bodies, which existed for a particular function necessary for the entire Buddhist community, i.e. the preservation of a particular portion of the *Piṭaka* by regular recitation, imbibed, in course of time, doctrines which could be looked upon as peculiar to the body holding them and in this way the body developed into a separate religious sect of Buddhism. According to Paramārtha, Gokulikas and Sarvāstivādins were experts in the *Abhidharma,* Sautrāntikas and Haimavatas in the *Sūtra* and Sammatīyas in the *Vinaya.*[34] The absence of a central authority, unlike the system of Papacy in Christianity or Khalifate in Islam, may also have contributed to ecclesiastical cleavages in Buddhism. Before he passed away, the Buddha had laid down: "*yo mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto, so vo maṁ accayena satthā.*"[35] Buddhism, in fact, tended to repudiate the force of mere authority in the quest of knowledge. In the absence of supreme authority, it was possible for the monks to interpret some subtle expressions of the Teacher in diverse ways, introduce some additional material and pass them in the name of the Master.

Scholars, such as, Przyluski and Hofinger have dealt mainly with the sociological factors responsible for the rise of sectarianism and new doctrines in Buddhism. Others, like N. Dutt and Demieville have emphasised the religious

causes.[36] Some more factors in this regard need to be examined. The expansion of Buddhism was a remarkably swift process. However, due to the difficulties of communication, it was hard to maintain any regular interaction between various Buddhist monastic communities located at far off places. Regional variety reflected in the social, cultural and religious temperament and behaviour of the people of different areas favoured a manifestation of local particularism, which often became a ground for more pronounced divisions. Sometimes, the hostile attitude of certain sections or rulers necessitated localisation of certain communities. Similarly, individual masters of Buddhism seem to have played a role in contributing to novel doctrinal directions. In the sects, such as, the Vātsīputrīya, Dharmaguptaka and Kāśyapīya, the respective masters, viz. Vātsīputra, Dharmagupta and Kāśyapa were the key figures, so much so, that the sects came to be named after them.[37] The impact exercised by Mahādeva, Kātyāyanīputra and Maudgalyāyana in the development of Mahāsaṅghika, Sarvāstivāda and Vibhajyavāda sects respectively is also well-known.

One might argue that it is largely because of philosophical problems that the Buddhist sects emerged and that the development of Buddhist thought depended entirely on the scientific analysis of psychic and parapsychic phenomena. We find it difficult to subscribe to the view that differences in dogma were the only dividing lines between the sects and that the *Vinaya* rules were almost uniform in them. In fact, we notice even at early stages of the Buddhist history a situation of confrontation between the champions of rigorous rules of conduct, on the one hand, and those advocating a liberal form, on the other. For example, the Buddha allowed a certain amount of latitude in observance of the *Vinaya* rules which was opposed by Devadatta. Similarly, the council of Vaiśālī, according to the *Pāli* or southern tradition, seems

to have deliberated solely on the *Vinaya* confrontation, which, instead of being reconciled, led to the first schism in the *saṅgha.* In later days I-tsing makes a note of differences of dress among the sects.[38] In fact, all the three major issues i.e. doctrinal, ritual and monastic, seem to have played a role in the formation of separate sects.

Owing to the royal patronage and liberal charity provided by Aśoka all sorts of people joined the *saṅgha.* Donning the yellow robe, with or without proper ordination, and enjoying the privilege and honour of a *bhikṣu,* these pseudo Buddhists started distorting the doctrine in their own way. The entry of a large number of disciples of contemporary heretical teachers[39] may also have contributed to the growth of differences and dissensions in course of time. Although we have no direct evidence about an interchange of thought between the Buddhists and non-Buddhists at this early stage, some contact may be surmised from certain parallelisms which can be noticed in some of the Buddhist and non-Buddhist developments. The close resemblance between *pudgalavāda* and *ātmavāda,* Sarvāstivāda and Sāṅkhya, especially in such concepts as *pariṇāmavāda, lokottaravāda* and *avatāravāda,*[40] suggests that there was undoubtedly some influence of non-Buddhistic thought on the growth of Buddhist sects and doctrinal controversies in this age. It may be noted that the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya notices the philosophical schools of the time and Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Lokāyata are included among the schools of *ānvīkṣikī.*[41] In short, speculative reasoning and logical debating grew apace among followers of the Buddha after his passing away. The very effort to interpret the words of the Master was a fertile source of debate and discussion. The effort to carry further the analysis of phenomena initiated by the Buddha was another factor responsible for the growth of divergent opinions. Some of the controversies, which arose during the third council, also suggest that the efforts to include or

exclude non-Buddhistic doctrines provided still another ground for their emergence.

From the foregoing discussion over the growth and ramification of the early Buddhist sects it may be surmised that there was an early growth of sectarianism in the community of monks. If we scrutinise the details of the first council[42] which followed soon after the demise of the Buddha, we notice that the attitudes of Mahākassapa and Purāṇa regarding the authenticity of the canon reflect the conflict of personal opinion against conciliar authority. The issue of dispute relates to the points of *Vinaya* and perhaps foreshadows the later growth of the Mahīśāsakas, though not their explicit emergence at this time. It may be stated here that Purāṇa, who held a dissenting opinion over the recitation of the canon in the first council, is later accorded an eminent position in the Mahīśāsaka sect. Similarly, the happenings of the second council[43] of Vaiśālī ultimately resulted in the great schism in the Buddhist order leading to its clear-cut division into the Theravāda and the Mahāsaṅghika schools. Thus, roughly about a hundred years after the passing away of the Buddha, the first two of the Buddhist sects originated and set into motion a process in the course of which as many as eighteen sects emerged in Buddhism. It seems, on the testimony of the *Kathāvatthu*, that most of the early Buddhist sects emerged between the second and third centuries of the Nirvāṇa of Buddha.

The third council[44] was occasioned by the growth of divergent views as also a great deal of diversity in the interpretation of the Buddhist doctrines, a development totally unacceptable to the orthodox sections of the monks, especially because it had deleterious repercussions over the actual functioning and organisation of the order which was virtually split up into many discordant elements. The Theravādins proceeded to dispute the unorthodox doctrines by compiling the famous book of the *Abhidharma*

Piṭaka called the *Kathāvatthu*. How far the Theravādins succeeded in their venture is difficult to assess, although, according to their own claims, no doctrine was perhaps left unrefuted. However, it appears from the text of the *Kathāvatthu* that most of the so-called heretics, instead of accepting defeat, claim to have vindicated their genuineness. Thus, the third council seems to have finally resulted in a parting of ways and to have helped the process of the crystallisation of various early Buddhist sects. It is interesting to note that the key sects established their strongholds at important Buddhist centres of that age. The Vātsīputrīyas developed in the Vatsa country and the areas round about it, with Kauśāmbī as the main centre. The Sarvāstivādins found their citadel at Mathurā and from there they spread to the northern and north-western regions. In the development of Buddhism from Mathurā to the northern and north-western regions, there emerged quite a few sub-sects, such as the Kāśyapīyas, the Uttarāpathakas, the Haimavatas, etc. in the evolution of which geographical factors seem to have played a considerable role, as the names of some of these sects suggest. The Mahāsaṅghikas had their growth in the eastern region of Vaiśālī among the Vajjian monks and at Pāṭaliputra and appear to have later spread towards Andhra and Dakṣiṇāpatha. One of their sects found a location in Bāmiyān. The Theravādins appear to have flourished in the region of Avanti and moved southwards to Sri Lanka. The nearness of *Pāli* to the Girnār dialect of Aśokan edicts may be underlined in this connection.

As regards the problem of affiliation among the different sects, basically, two lines of development may be observed, viz. the Theravāda and the Mahāsaṅghika. The essential homogeneity in the basic tenets of the Theravāda sects seems to sustain the hypothesis that the seeds of some of them had become manifest prior to the division of the Buddhist order into the Theravāda and the Mahāsaṅghika sects. And the

fact that they still happened to differ mutually owes its development to the inherent possibilities of difference in the interpretation of Buddha's teaching in the process of which they propagated cardinal doctrines of their own. The overall conformity in the attitude of the Mahāsaṅghika group of schools may be attributed to the fact that they were tending towards the evolution of a new phase of Buddhism, viz., Mahāyāna, and thus a considerable number of their major doctrines are found to reflect a transitional stage from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna. The basic motivation behind this tendency was the apotheosis of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva and the corresponding debasement of the ideal of Arhat.

The doctrinal differentiation of the more orthodox sects appears to have occurred in the course of the effort to evolve more precise definitions and classification of 'phenomena' (*'dharmas'*). Such 'analysis' is the central task of *Abhidhamma* of which the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda canons give us perfected examples. The main cleavage between these two occurred over the ancient and inevitable problem of the relationship of change to permanence. It may be noted that the Mahāyāna (arising later from the Mahāsaṅghikas) avoids this dilemma by refusing to concede the reality of the *dharmas* themselves. The Mahāsaṅghikas already evince their idealistic tendency by emphasising *dharmatā* more than the *dharmas*, thus multiplying the number of *asaṁkhatas* (unconditioned, e.g. Nirvāṇa). While accepting the more realistic tendency of the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins, the Vātsīputrīyas departed from this by seeking to be more consistent to the facts of experience on the subject of the 'person' (*puggala*) without jettisoning the principle of impermanence as applied to 'spiritual substance' or psychic reality.

NOTES

1. Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 237; cf. G.D. De, *Democracy in the Early Buddhist Saṅgha*, Preface p. xi.
2. *Mahāvagga*, pp. 21–22.
3. Ibid., p. 23 : '*Carartha, bhikkhave, cārikaṁ bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukaṁpāya, atthāya hitāya sukhāya deva-manussānaṁ...*'
4. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
5. *Dīgha Nikāya*, II, p. 118.
6. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, pp. 175–176.
7. *Cullavagga*, pp. 180–181.
8. Cf. *Kosambakakhandhak*a, ch. X of *Mahāvagg*a.
9. *Cullavagga*, pp. 300–01.
10. Cf. *e.g. Majjhima Nikāya*, III, pp. 46–47.
11. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (ERE)*, Vol. IX, s.v. Sects (Buddhist) pp. 307–08.
12. L. de La Vallèe Poussin, *ERE*, Vol. IV, s.v. Councils, p. 182; E. Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature*, pp. 7 ff.
13. Cf. Sāñchī Relic Casket Inscription in Lüders list nos. 156, 158; cf. S.J. Marshall, *Monuments of Sāñchī, JRAS* (1905) p. 691; D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka*, pp. 144-45.
14. Andrè Bareau, *Les sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Vèhicule, Bulletin de l'E'cole Francaise d'Extrème Orient*, pp. 309–10.
15. *Dīpavaṁsa*, V. 39ff; *Mahāvaṁsa*, V, J. Masuda, 'Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist Schools'. *Asia Major*, II, (1925) pp.14-18; A. Bareau, *Trois traitès Sur Les Sectes Bouddhiques*, Pt. II, pp.167-172, 192.
16. S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*, p. 40; cf. *Points of Controversy*, Prefatory Notes.
17. Cf. *Dīpavaṁsa*, Chapter V; *Samantapāsādikā,* 31, 46; *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā,* p. 5f.
18. N. Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism*, (*EMB*) Vol. II, p. 268.
19. S.N. Dube, 'Religious Conviction of Aśoka,' *University of Rajasthan Studies* (History) 1965-66.
20. *C.I.I.*, Vol. I, *Inscriptions of Aśoka,* ed. Hultzsch, pp. 162–63; cf. also R.B. Pandey, *Aśoka ke Abhilekha*, pp. 183, 185.
21. R.B. Pandey, *op. cit.* p. 15.
22. Cf. S.N. Dube, "Cross Currents of Buddhist Thought in the Age of Aśoka," *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, General Editor, D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Vol. I pt. 2 *Life, Thought and Culture in India* (from 600 BC To c. AD 300) ed. G.C. Pande, pp. 618–649.
23. *JRAS* (1915) pp. 805 ff; cf. also Malalasekera, *DPPN*, Vol. I s.v. *Kathāvatthu*, p. 505; B.M. Barua, *Aśoka and his Inscriptions*, p. 237.
24. O. Rosenberg, *Die Probleme der Buddhistschen Philosophie*, Vorwort, p. xiii.

25. *Mātikās* are list of *dhammas* which we find sometime enumerated in the *Vinaya Piṭaka,* cf. *Mahāvagga*, pp. 120, 324, 368; *Chullavagga*, pp. 421–23. It may be noted that three *Abhidhamma* texts, viz., *Dhammasaṅgaṇi, Puggalapaññatti* and *Dhātukathā* start with a *mātikā.*
26. Beal, *Si-yu-ki*, pp. 371–72; E. Obermiller, *Bu-ston- History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, Pt. II, pp. 46–52.
27. G.C. Pande, *Bauddha Dharma ke Vikāsa kā Itihāsa*, p. 63.
28. Cf. *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, p. 99, II, pp. 72-74.
29. Cf. *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, pp. 426-32, 483 ff; *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, III, pp. 257 ff., IV, pp. 374–403.
30. A.B. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon,* p. 63; Poussin, *ERE*, I, s.v. Nirvāṇa; T.H. Perera, "Was Lord Buddha an Agnostic"? *Buddhist*, XXXVII, No. 5, pp. 137–39.
31. Cf. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, II, pp. 438–39.
32. E. Frauwallner, *op. cit.,* pp. 1–2.
33. Cf. *Mahāvagga*, chapter X, see also pp. 120, 324, 368; *Cullavagga*, pp. 421–23; *Majjhima Nikāya*, *Kosāmbīsutta*; *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, p. 38, II, p. 145; *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, I, p. 15; *Papañcasūdanī*, p. 79.
34. A. Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Vèhicule*, p. 50.
35. *Dīgha Nikāya*, II, p. 118.
36. Jean Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājgraha*, pp. 307–33; H. Hofinger, "Etudes sur le Concile de Vaiśālī," *Bibliothèque de Museon*, Vol. XX, pp. 22–148, 183-96; N. Dutt, *EMB*, II pp. 14 ff.; Paul Demieville, *L'origine des Sectes Bouddhiques d'après Paramārtha,* pp. 259–60.
37. S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*, pp. 55 ff.
38. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as practised in India and the Malaya Archipelago*, Eng. tr. by J.Takakusu, pp. 66–76.
39. *Mahāvagga*, pp. 22, 55.
40. *Bhagavadgītā*, IV. 9; see also *Mahābhārata-Nārāyananīya* section of the *Śāntiparva.*
41. *Arthaśāstra*, I. 2.
42. *Cullavagga,* pp. 411–12; *Mahāvaṁsa*, III, *Dīpavaṁsa*, IV; Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, II, pp. 159–61; *Si-yu-ki*, pp. 379ff.
43. *Cullavagga*, pp. 416ff. *Mahāvaṁsa*, IV, 9 ff., *Dīpavaṁsa*, IV, 52, V, 18.
44. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā,* p. 7; *Mahāvaṁsa*, V, *Mahābodhi-vaṁsa.*

VII

CRITICAL TRANSITION IN BUDDHIST IDEAS

A basic dispute which arose around the age of Aśoka and was discussed in the *Kathāvatthu,* centred over the nature of Buddhahood, a problem the Buddha had refused to discuss fully and had partly included among the indeterminates. Closely aligned with this were the issues relating to the nature and status of Arhats and Bodhisattvas. The goal of *Dhamma-Vinaya*, the way-faring in early Buddhism, was supposed to lie in the ideal of Arhatship (*Arhattva*) and the attainment of Nirvāṇa. Arhat (Arhant) is the title given to the perfect man in Buddhism.[1] It was a state of spiritual consummation by grades defined as three in technical terms of the doctrine viz. (i) *sotāpatti* (entering the stream), (ii) *sakadāgāmī* (the condition in which there can be one 'return' only) and (iii) *anāgāmī* (the condition in which there can be no 'return') and (iv) *Arhattva* (the consummate condition of an Arhat). In the earliest Buddhist usage, Buddhahood and Arhatship are so closely allied that it is difficult to draw any significant distinction between the two. One might say that early Buddhism was a process and system of training in perfectability of which the culmination was a spiritual status technically termed Arhatship, exemplified by the personality of the Buddha himself.

Thus, the earliest usages in the Buddhist canon do not distinguish an Arhat from the Buddha just as the Jainas did not distinguish an Arhat from the Jina (Mahāvīra). The earliest usage is not distinctively Buddhistic either. Within

Buddhism, however, a distinction between mere Arhat and a Buddha emerged quite early.[2] A process was set into motion by a section of the monkish community which sought to dilute and delimit the ideal of Arhatship. Within a century or so of the passing away of Gautama Buddha, there emerged issues of fierce dispute over the concept of Arhatship and the quality of perfection attained therein. It is borne out by the *Kathāvatthu*[3] that a variety of such views postulated clear possibilities of imperfection in the state of Arhatship. It is interesting that some of the so-called heterodox views are also recorded in the accounts of Vasumitra[4], Bhavya,[5] Vinītadeva[6] and Tāranātha as the famous five points of Mahādeva[7] resulting into the great schism in the *saṅgha* and its division into the first two sects, viz. Theravāda and Mahāsaṅghika. Occasionally, the *Abhidharmakośa*[8] provides valuable insight into the controversial issues. The first four of the five points of Mahādeva, concerning the question of the nature of an Arhat, tend to render a direct blow to the orthodox conception of Arhatship, as it appears in the *Nikāyas* and other *Pāli* texts. Vasumitra's treatise enumerates Mahādeva's postulations in the following way: (a) That an Arhat can be seduced by others. (b) That an Arhat may be ignorant of some matters. (c) That an Arhat may be in doubt. (d) That an Arhat may receive information (instruction) from another person.

The corresponding assertions on Arhatship, as discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*,[9] are: (a) Arhat has impure discharge, i.e. he may be subject to unconscious temptations. (b) He may lack knowledge, i.e. he may be an Arhat and not know it. (c) He may have doubt on matters of doctrine. (d) Arhat is excelled by others. The *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*, commentary on *Kathāvatthu* by Buddhaghoṣa, ascribes these propositions to the Pūrvaśaila (Pubbaseliya) and Aparaśaila (Aparaseliya) sects,[10] the works of Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva attribute some of the above to the Mahāsaṅghikas

in general and their sub-sects, i.e. Ekavyāvahārikas, Lokottaravādins and Kaukkuṭikas in particular as also to some of the Theravāda sects.[11] It is interesting that even the *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā* attributes some disparaging views about Arhatship to certain offshoots of the Theravāda. For example, the Sammatīyas, Vātsīputrīyas, Sarvāstivādins, as also some Mahāsaṅghikas, held the view that an Arhat can fall from his position.[12] The so-called heterodox movement against the early Buddhist ideal of Arhatship was vehemently debated at length by the Theravādins,[13] who rejected completely the contingency of retrogression of an emancipated being, even such who attained that state only temporarily in meditation. They also rejected the suggestion that gods of the Māra group can impose physical impurities on an Arhat. Since he has acquired complete knowledge, he cannot have any doubt or be surpassed by others in wisdom. He has cast aside every fetter of ignorance and doubt in attāining his end.

The spirited defence of the Theravādins notwithstanding, certain new sects in early Buddhism proclaimed notions about Arhatship which were unpalatable to the ideal of orthodox sections, especially the Theravādins. Some of the new theses, as propounded, seem to suggest observed failings, e.g.: (a) The ideal of an individualistic Arhat may not be so attractive as that of the compassionate Buddha. This comparison would highlight the limitation of the former. (b) There is some reason to postulate a psychological hostility arising from institutional and historical reasons. (c) Some of the theses suggest actually observed failings and limitations. (d) There is also room for divergent interpretation in the canonical statements on Arhatship.

According to the *Pāli* tradition, the second council[14] was held at Vaiśālī to discuss the ten practices of the Vajjian monks for which not only recognition was categorically refused but these acts were unanimously declared to be un-

Vinayic. From the metaphysical point of view, the acts of the Vajjians hardly appear significant. But they do indicate a more liberal attitude on the part of eastern monks in general and Vajjians in particular. A people, thoroughly imbued in democratic traditions, they were unlikely to submit to the exclusive powers and privileges claimed by the Arhats and, thus, 'the real point at issue was the rights of the individual, as well as those of the provincial communities as against the prescriptions of a centralised hierarchy'.[15] Evidently, as the Vajjian monks' liberal views would not be acceptable to the orthodox elders, the former would have been severely ridiculed by the latter as is indicated by the antecedents of the second council. Impeached in the council, the eastern monks seem to have started, as a reaction, their campaign against the very same Arhats by calling in question their claims and authority and seeking instead to proclaim their fallibility. In order to uphold their views and innovations with regard to the *Vinaya* and *Dhamma* they organised at Pāṭaliputra a separate council called *mahāsaṅgha* or *mahāsaṅgīti* without making any discrimination of Arhat and non-Arhat. In view of the high number of attendance at the *mahāsaṅgīti*, which is given as 10,000,[16] it seems likely that no such discrimination was really made. In this council the Vajjian monks are supposed to have carried out things according to their own wishes. They altered the course of the *sūtras* in the *Vinaya* and the five *Nikāyas*, removed some of them and interpolated new ones. It is also added that they refused to accept the authenticity of *Parivāra*, *Paṭisaṁbidāmagga*, *Niddesa*, certain *Jātakas* and six texts of the *Abhidhamma*.[17] It is difficult to assume, however, that all these texts had really been compiled by that time. The *mahāsaṅgīti* of Pāṭaliputra, thus, seems to have formalised the division of the original order into two sects. On the one hand was the large bulk of eastern monks with its strongholds at Vaiśālī and Pāṭaliputra and, on the other, was the section

of western monks with their chief centres at Kauśāmbī, Avanti and Mathurā, a group in which the influence of the old *sthaviras* was predominant.

Another account of the second council, given by Vasumitra and followed by Bhavya and Vinītadeva attributes the first breach in the *saṅgha* to the 'Five Points of Mahādeva.' It is gathered from the *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣālun* (chapter 99)[18] that Mahādeva was a Brāhmin from Mathurā and he received his ordination at Kukkuṭārāma in Pāṭaliputra. His zeal and abilities crowned him with the headship of the *saṅgha* there. With the help of the ruling king, who was his friend and patron, Mahādeva succeeded in ousting the senior monks from that monastery. Thereupon, he started propagating his five propositions. As already noted, the first four propositions of Mahādeva relate to Arhat of whom a startling conception was put forth. These points clearly indicated that they were not all fully perfect persons as was the view of orthodox Theravādins, and that the Arhats had a few limitations. Such stipulations naturally gave rise to a serious dissension leading to the first schism in the Buddhist *saṅgha* and the emergence of the two sects, Mahāsaṅghika and Theravāda. The points raised by Mahādeva are evidently suggestive of a critical attitude of the emerging sect towards the elders who claimed Arhatship to be the highest attainment. It is likely, therefore, that the Vajjians, having suffered a defeat in the second council, launched a counter-attack against the conservatives and the prevalance of the so-called 'bogus Arhats' among the latter provided them a favourable issue of criticism. In Mahādeva they seem to have found an able champion of their viewpoint. The Buddhist *saṅgha* was, perhaps, undergoing a state of demoralisation about the time of the second council.[19]

It seems that within a century or so of the passing away of Lord Buddha, the Arhat ideal of the original teaching tended to give rise, within a monastic system, to a kind of

soteriological individualism. At the hands of some orthodox sects, especially the Theravādins, the ideal received an individualistic twist, who ardently emphasised that attainment of Arhatship was the only way of salvation and freedom from suffering. In the defence of the Theravādins it may be said that they tried to faithfully adhere to the moral, monastic and disciplinary life of early Buddhism. However, the purely individualistic attempts of the Theravādins to pursue the three-fold development of '*śīla*', '*samādhi*' and '*prajñā*' (paññā), with the consequent attainment of Arhatship, could well be deemed inadequate from the point of view of the average mass of mankind. For the spiritually more ambitious the ideal of Arhatship would appear pale beside the glory of the Buddha and may well lead them, through this comparison, to look at Arhatship with critical eyes. The individualistic tendency of the Theravāda, therefore, provoked protests from others in the Buddhist *saṅgha* and contributed, by way of a reaction in a significant measure, towards the growth of unpalatable notions about the ideal.

The Buddhist canonical literature was also not wanting in lending support to the new enthusiasts. Some obscure passages in the texts made it difficult to draw any distinction between the two concepts:(a) Buddhahood and (b) Arhatship. For example, it was asserted: "Every Buddha was an Arhat. Every Arhat was Buddha".[20] The Buddha himself is habitually called an Arhat. At one place it is said, "Let us ask Gotam, the awakened one, who has passed beyond anger and fear....[21] But the same adjectives, as we find here, are used elsewhere for an Arhat.[22] Similarly, in another description of the Buddha,[23] all the epithets used for him are generally found applied to one or other of his disciples. Arhat is, in fact, one of the oft-used titles for the Buddha but it was not an exclusive title and all those, who came to realise the Truth, are said to have become Arhats, the

number accounting to as many as sixty-one,[24] including the Buddha himself. In the third *dhyāna*, which denotes the final stage of 'worldly' wisdom, just before the 'Path' is reached, the equanimity of the Arhat, who 'never abandons his natural state of purity' when presented with desirable or undesirable objects, is similar to the equanimity of a Buddha which is often lauded in the scriptures. It is said that the equanimity of Buddhas and Arhats is unaffected by the reception his teachings may receive, and they feel no joy when it is accepted, no displeasure when it is rejected,[25] but remain unmoved and fully mindful. The teacher never called himself a Buddha as distinct from an Arhat. When addressed as Buddha or spoken of as such by his disciples, it is always doubtful whether anything more is meant than an enlightened Arhat. In the oldest documents the two conceptions seem to be in a state of fusion. As a matter of fact, the term has been used in early texts without any great precision, It may be an epithet of the Buddha, or a name for the eighth of the holy persons, the one who has won final sanctification. That person is sometimes distinguished from the Pratyekabuddhas. At other times, however, the Arhat is either a disciple (*śrāvaka*) who must 'hear' from a Tathāgata, or a Pratyekabuddha.[26]

Thus, the early Buddhist doctrine was formulated with the idea of enabling the disciple to become an Arhat. It is difficult, however, to accept that the ideal of Arhat was synonymous with Buddhahood and that no distinction was made between the two in early canonical works. Such a view would inevitably imply an equality between the teacher and his disciples which would have been hardly acceptable to the Buddhist community with the exalted Buddha being their teacher. Even an ardent disciple could not have conceived of himself as attaining the same degree of enlightenment as the Buddha, lacking, as he must have realised, in qualities that enable one become a Buddha. We

come across such passages in early texts where a difference between the two concepts may be brought out clearly. Attention may be drawn to a dialogue between Sāriputta and the Buddha.[27] Sāriputta here confesses that he has no knowledge about the able and 'awakened ones' that have been and are to come, as also of the present times. Sāriputta was one of the greatest direct disciples of the Buddha and yet in his accomplishments, he stands nowhere in comparison to the Buddha. It was logical to assume that a Buddha would possess additional qualities of perfection as compared to an Arhat. There is an illuminating incident referred to in the *Sphuṭārtha* on the *Abhidharmakośa* where it is shown that a Buddha surpasses all his disciples which enables him to become the universal teacher or saviour.[28] Further, the theory of a number of successive Buddhas[29] presupposes the conception of a Buddha as different and a more exalted personage than an Arhat. In a famous dialogue, Lord Buddha is reported to have said that he is neither a man (*manussa*), nor a *gandharva* (*gandhabba*) nor a *yakṣa* (*yakka*) nor even a deva or *brahma*, but a Buddha.[30] In fact, the Buddhist Theravāda tradition itself speaks of three kinds of saints (*ārya*, i.e. persons having won the Path) as being 'adepts,' or 'enlightened,' or as 'having' Nirvāṇa. They are the Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas and Buddhas. Vasubandhu points out[31] that Lord Buddha alone has destroyed ignorance in its entirety, and is wholly free from that which prevents us from seeing things as they are. The Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas have freed themselves from the delusion which is soiled by the defilements, but in them the ignorance which is unsoiled by the defilements continues to operate. They do not know the special attributes of a Buddha, nor objects which are very distant in time or space, nor the infinite complexity of things. The Arhat is contented to know everything which concerns him personally, the Pratyekabuddha, in addition, knows conditioned co-

production, but still the bulk of the universe lies beyond him. The distinction between an Arhat and a Buddha is made evidently clear in the works of Mahāyāna, where it is said that Arhats who are perfect '*śrāvakas'*, get rid of only *kleśāvaraṇa*, i.e. the veil of impurities consisting of *rāga*, *doṣa*, *sīlabbataparāmāsa* and *vicikicchā* but not of *jñeyāvaraṇa*, i.e. the veil which conceals the Truth - the veil which can only be removed by realising the *dharma-śūnyatā* or *tathatā*. It is the Buddha alone, who, as perfectly emancipated, has both *kleśāvaraṇa* and *jñeyāvaraṇa* removed.[32] Only as great a man as the Śākyamuni Gautama could become a Buddha. The difference in the potential and accomplishment of the practitioner came to constitute later the basic distinction between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is interesting that the Theravādins, though they desperately try to defend the cherished image of Arhatship, have to grant that the *bodhi* attained by an Arhat is characterised by the knowledge of the four paths (*catumaggañāṇa*) and not omniscience (*sabbaññutañāṇa*) which is the *bodhi* of the Buddhas.[33]

It is plausible, therefore, that the basic difference in the two conceptions, inherent in the *Nikāyas*, was brought to the fore in course of time, and led to two parallel developments in the history of Buddhism. One led to gradual decline in the ideal of Arhatship and the other towards eventual deification of the Buddha. There appears to have been a close inter-relationship between the two tendencies. Generally the same group of sects, which carried the anti-Arhat campaign, led *pari passu* a movement seeking to establish the transcendentality of the Buddha. A process was, thus, set moving under which the life of the Master formed the edifice and the rival sects provided material for superstructure. Consequently, while the orthodox Theravādins adhered strictly to the realistic view of the person of their teacher, the heterodox radicals proceeded boldly to idealise and eventually deify him.

The original Buddha-nature, as it appeared to his immediate disciples, may aptly be described as essentially human.[34] They were inspired, no doubt, by his impressive personality, but they still viewed him as a human being. Obviously, therefore, his early disciples paid less attention to his life than to his teachings. This emerges most clearly from the fact that they preserved his teachings more carefully than his biography. The Buddha himself disparaged attention to his 'corruptible body' (*pūtikāya*) holding his true body to be the *Dhamma*.[35] The disciples revered him as a 'great ascetic', a 'great sage', nevertheless, he was supposed to have been born and to have died just as everyone else does on this earth. The physical body is born of *karman* (*karmajanya*) and it is impregnated with *karman* (*karmamaya*). This is the belief about human body upheld in the *Upaniṣads*, among the Buddhists, as well as among many of the Buddha's contemporary *parivrājakas*.[36] The references to the Buddha in early *Pāli* literature do not project the humanised portrait of a divine being, but a clear belief in a historical person. The Buddha never arrogated to himself divinity. He explicitly disclaimed omniscience in the sense in which it was claimed by the Jainas for their Master.[37]

It is, at the same time, true that in the 'three jewels' of Buddhism, the Buddha, undoubtedly, was the most luminous and central to his followers. It is out of a sense of total commitment, a sense of ultimacy and transcendental concern that an entrant in the *saṅgha* takes the vow at the time of his ordination: *Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.* Obviously, he goes to refuge to a Buddha and not to a man. To say that the Buddha was only a man is to deny that he was a Buddha. Numerous passages in the *Pāli* canon underline that the Tathāgata is more than a great man (*mahāpurisa*), more than the best man (*uttamapurisa*, or *appamāno, appameyo, amatassa dātā,* etc.).

After his physical disappearance from the scene his

personage became the focal point of attraction and faith for a large section of the community, probably, more so for those who nurtured a grievance against individualistic and authoritarian Arhats. The 'easterners' (*pācinaka*), thus, claimed in their opposition to the *theras* (elders) that the Buddha was born in their territory in the east.[38] As against the early tendency of little attention to his biography it was taken up with great interest. There emerged a strong tendency of docetism. Superhuman qualities and attributes were discovered in his person. In the course of such developments it came to be assumed that the discourse or speech (*vohāra*) of the Buddha on this earth was supramundane.[39] In other words, even during his early career the actions of the Buddha were *lokottara* (transcendental). That a single utterance of the Tathāgata implied the revelation of all truths at once.[40] The *sūtras* or discourses preached by him are perfect (*nitārtha*) in themselves. The Buddhas speak only *dharma* (doctrine), as such, their teaching is concerned only with *paramārthasatya* and not with *saṁvṛtisatya*. All the ten powers (*balas*) of the Tathāgata are Ariyan. The physical body (*rūpa-kāya*) of the Tathāgata has no limit in space, his virtues and powers are infinite, and his life has immeasurable duration. He has the power to perform supernormal feats.[41] The power (*ṛddhi*) of the Buddha or his pupils enables them to effect whatever they wish, regardless of the laws of nature. As envisaged fundamentally in Buddhism, all life in this world is characterised by evil and suffering. Obviously, therefore, the Buddha never lived as a human being. He appeared to do so out of compassion for the ignorant.[42] It was only his *nirmāṇa-kāya* (*abhinimittojino*) that delivered the doctrine on this earth.[43] To provide gifts to such a Buddha, whose body is made of *anāśrava-dharma*s and hence incapable of being moved by mere mundane emotions, such as, pity, cannot result into any rewards.[44] He being perfect in every

respect, could not have been subject to the limitations of life on earth.[45] He is at all times in a complete union with all truths, in a deep contemplation, i.e. *yoga.* He is omniscient, comprehending all things at once, in the thought of one single moment, because in his mind is always present the mystic store of *prajñā,* i.e. wisdom. In his thought are constantly, at the same time, the wisdom of extinction (*kṣaya-prajñā*) and the wisdom of non-origination (*anutpāda-prajñā*).[46] The above reflects a process seeking to idealise and identify the Buddha's person with a universal Buddhahood. 'Gotama the Man' the human Buddha of primitive Buddhism was, thus, gradually dehumanised and deified in later Buddhism. Claims, such as, transcendentality (*lokottaratā*) or omniscience (*sarvajñatā*), etc. were, perhaps, registered for the first time in works like the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Paṭisaṁbidāmagga.* New assertions, as noted above, suggest that the general drift of the ideas was towards making the Buddha completely transcendent, i.e. beyond the laws of nature.

With the growth of such notions, it was natural to derive the illusoriness of the physical body of a Buddha. Both the *Pāli* and the Sanskrit traditions agree substantially as regards identification of the sections that pleaded new theses contemplating a supramundane nature of the Buddha. The *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā* ascribes a good many points, debated in the *Kathāvatthu,* to the Andhra schools generally, which would imply the Caitikas and some to the Pūrvaśaila, Aparaśaila, Rājagirika and Siddharthika schools. The consensus of the new ideas consists in making the Buddha a trascendental being (*lokottara*). Philosophically, this involves the two crucial conceptions of *anāśrava-rūpa* and *nirmāṇa-kāya.* The former is analogous to the *śuddhasattva* referred to in the *Yogabhāṣya* to explain the Yogic concept of *Īśvara,*[47] who is always free and always the lord (*sadaiva muktaḥ sadaiva Īśvaraḥ*). The later concepts of *mahāmāyā, bindu* or *aprākṛta-*

sattva are similar. Basically, any concept of the supernatural person presupposes the concept of a supernatural matter, stuff or matrix through which the person acts in the natural world without being subject to its corruptibility. It was this logic of the situation which later led the Christians to postulate an immaculate birth for Jesus and a transfigured or glorious body for Him when risen from the grave and which led to gnostic and docetic ideas among some of them. The doctrine of the *nimitta* Buddha is analogous to the Yogic doctrine of *nirmāṇa-kāya* or *nirmāṇa-citta*.[48] What appears as a body from outside is really mind within, being nothing but a thought projection of the Buddha or *yogī*. The advantage of acting through such a body is that it does not lead to the accumulation of *karman*. These two doctrines, thus, make it possible for Buddha to remain wholly pure and yet move in the world.

Some of the above new ideas appear to be significant from the point of view of the development of Mahāyāna. Such are the following: that the Buddha does not live in the human world, remaining always in the *Tuṣita* heaven where he was before his coming to this world, and that it was his *nirmāṇa-kāya* only that visited the earth. Thus, the entire preaching of *Dhamma* was done by the appartional image of the Buddha. One is tempted to perceive a *saṁbhoga-kāya* conception of the Buddha in these formulations. It may be pointed out that in the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions the Buddha was conceived in two forms: (a) *rūpa-kāya*, i.e. the perfected human form in which he lived on this earth after his enlightenment and (b) *dharma-kāya*, i.e. the doctrinal aspect of the Buddha and his pure qualities. The Mahāsaṅghikas made a distinct departure from this point of view. According to them, the form that appeared on this earth was illusory or *nirmāṇa-kāya*. But the real form of the Buddha, i.e. his *rūpa-kāya* should be taken to be infinite and eternal like the Mahāyānic *saṁbhoga-kāya*. The *rūpa-*

kāya is the result of past good deeds. It is utterly pure and extremely radiant and is capable of assuming a proper shape at a suitable place owing to *ādhiṣṭhānika ṛddhi*. This conception is, in fact, a prototype of the *saṁbhoga-kāya* of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Mahāsaṅghika distinction of the Arhat from the Buddha and subsequent raising of the Buddha to the status of a transcendental being, not merely an enlightened being, was the necessary prerequisite for the development of the Mahāyāna.

A critical analysis of the views preserved in the *Kathāvatthu,* the treatises of Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva and *Mahāvastu,* etc. would show that the new ideas about the Buddha and Buddhahood sustain the twin tendencies ascribed to the development of Buddhist docetism. One is the way of mythical fancies about the superhuman and trascendental nature of the Buddha and the other that of metaphysical speculation on his personality as a Tathāgata and on its relation with the truth (*dhamma*) which he revealed. Mahāyāna marks the meeting point of the two streams and the culmination of Buddhist docetism. The new ideas, propounded by the Mahāsaṅghikas and others, are characterised by both types of speculations. It may be noted, however, that, whereas ideas preserved in the *Kathāvatthu* and *Mahāvastu* are mostly of the first type, i.e. mythical fancies about the supramundane nature of the Buddha, those enumerated by Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva contain many such theses as to explain his personage in the latter aspect, i.e. as a metaphysical principle and in relation to the doctrine preached by him. The other side grew as part of a developing religious sentiment which is comparable to *bhakti* (devotion). In fact, the *Bhagavadgītā,* with the emphasis on the concepts of supernatural God (*Bhagavāna*), incarnation (*avatāra*), the supernatural birth and deeds of Kṛṣṇa[49] and the doctrine of grace, presents a parallel development out of the Upaniṣadic ideas. We do not know

what direct contact there was between the Buddhist monks and the Bhāgavatas but they do appear as parallel, though, different lines of thought between which interaction was certainly possible.[50] One may, however, point out that the similarity here is more in sentiment than in the conceptions, because the Buddha is never conceived as a God, for he is never the creator or ordainer of the universe. Nor, on the other hand, is the incarnation (*avatāra*) merely an appearance. The Buddhist feeling of reverence and adoration for the Buddha and the Bodhisattva is not *bhakti* (devotion) in the sense of love for an indwelling deity who assumes a human form so that he may enter into a personal human relation with his disciples. The attitude of the Buddhists is essentially that of '*gurubhakti*,' seeking to transcend human life with the help of the Buddha. The goal for the Buddhists is utter transcendence while the *bhakti* religion culminated in the doctrine of participation in divine immanence or *līlā*.

The transcendence of the Buddha was bound to be projected back over his previous existence as a Bodhisattva. The conception of Bodhisattva and the growth of the Bodhisattva cult followed as a corollary to the Buddhological speculations. Thus, if the Buddha is transcendental[51] and his body is made of *anāśrava dharmas*, the Bodhisattva should also not be taken as an average human being. He must also be supramudane. In the works of Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva several such views are attributed to the Mahāsaṅghikas and their sub-sects. The *Mahāvastu*[52] and the *Lalitavistara*[53] also contain similar reflections on the concept and nature of a Bodhisattva. Some of the views, as advocated by the Andhakas, Uttarāpathakas, etc. are discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*,[54] e.g.: (a) Is one, gifted with thirty-two characteristic marks, necessarily a Bodhisattva or not? (b) Whether or not a Bodhisattva takes rebirth into a state of woe and undertakes a difficult course of life out of his own

free will? (c) Whether or not he is destined or assured prior to his last birth?

The Mahāsaṅghikas and the Lokottaravādins came to believe that the Bodhisattvas are self-born. They appear as human beings for the sake of conformity to the world (*lokānuvartana*) although their form is only mental (*manomaya*).[55] The Ekavyāvahārikas added that Bodhisattvas, in fact, have no form.[56] The Vetulyakas went to the extent of saying that from the *Tuṣitaloka* there descended only a *nirmāṇa-kāya* of Buddha on this earth.[57] The Sarvāstivādins also contributed to the growth of a new Bodhisattva ideal by subscribing to the existence of numerous Buddhas and countless Bodhisattvas as also the contemporaneity of the former in different areas (*kṣetras*).[58] They believed that a Bodhisattva is not only placed in a crystal casket put within the womb, but, while in that state, he is said to preach the *Dhamma* to the heavenly beings who flock around him.[59]

Another debate centred round the view which sought to affirm that a Bodhisattva undertakes hardships of his own accord and free-will. The Bodhisattva takes rebirth in unhappy circumstances, i.e. in purgatory, as an animal, a ghost or a demon of his own free-will and not as a result of his previous actions. The idea of unbounded compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) forms an attractive doctrine of the Mahāyāna and a Bodhisattva is its very incarnation. The most remarkable manifestation of the compassion of a Boddhisattva consists in his voluntary resolve to suffer the agonies of dreadful purgatories during innumerable aeons, if need be, so that he may lead all beings to perfect enlightenment.[60] The Andhaka thesis in question, thus, seems to draw attention to the same trait of a Bodhisattva's personality i.e. unbounded compassion, which in later Mahāyāna works, such as, those of Āryasūra and Śāntideva came to characterise the principal feature of the Bodhisattva ideal, perhaps, even at the expense of the *bodhi* idea. Similarly, the idea of *niyāma*

(assurance) of the Bodhisattva is fully developed in the Mahāyāna. We learn from the *Kathāvatthu* and its commentary that the Andhakas, Pūrvaśailas and Aparaśailas held the view that one who is morally certain of salvation has entered the path of assurance. As we analyse two debates on *niyāma*, mentioned in this text, it becomes obvious that the controversy really rests on the interpretation given to the word *niyata* in Mahāyāna texts as against that given by the *Kathāvatthu* and its commentator. In short, the Bodhisattva controversies seem to suggest two things: (a) That the previous lives of the Buddha had begun to excite interest, speculation and discussion and (b) that, although a systematic Bodhisattva doctrine was yet to crystalise, some of the points affirmed by sections of the Mahāsaṅghikas were already heading in that direction as the one about the Bodhisattva taking rebirth into the states of suffering and hardship or the other about the *niyāma* (assurance) of the Bodhisattva.

An analysis of the evidence, as preserved in the *Kathāvatthu*, treatises of Vasumitra, Bhavya, Vinītadeva and works, such as, *Mahāvastu, Lalitavistara, Jātakas, Avadānas,* etc. would show that some of the characteristic features of the Mahāyāna had already become manifest in certain doctrines propounded by such sects as the Mahāsaṅghikas, Sarvāstivādins and Dharmaguptakas.[61] Their semi-Mahāyānic formulations relate to: (a) The conception of Bodhisattva, (b) the practice of six *pāramitās*, (c) the development of *Bodhichitta*, (d) the goal of Buddhahood and (e) the *Trikāya* conception.

In short, the ideal of an extraordinary individual following the career of the Bodhisattva in order to attain Buddhahood, which implies not merely emancipation, but also omniscience, special powers and the role of the universal teacher, gained popularity in place of the ideal of Arhatship, i.e. emancipation from the passions and ills of the world.

The very first schism in the *saṅgha* had underscored the sharp distinction between an Arhat and the Buddha, making it relatively easy to become an Arhat, whereas a Buddha is still a rare and possibly superhuman being. The aim, therefore, should be to become a Buddha and not simply an Arhat attaining final Nirvāṇa now. The Bodhisattva strives for the emancipation of all. Therefore, every Buddhist must become a Bodhisattva. The Buddhism of individual emancipation became the Buddhism of universal salvation by faith. It is in these new developments that we should look for the transition which led finally to the rise of Mahāyāna putting forward its essential doctrine of 'Buddhahood' as the proper aim of the 'Buddhist wayfarer,' so to say, and the way of the Bodhisattva, the future Buddha as, therefore, the proper course of training to be undertaken. The Mahāsaṅghika schools seem to have opened the way towards this eventual development.

The *Kathāvatthu* also highlights some debates relating to diverse problems of the Path and its factors, e.g. (a) the Path can be attained by exclamations, such as, *idaṁ dukkhaṁ*,[62] (b) four-fold fruition of religious life may be acquired by one single Path,[63] or (c) the Path is five-fold.[64] There are others concerning assurance (*niyāma*)[65] or the possibilities of penetrating the truth and[66] attaining Arhathood.[67] The two key aspects of spiritual 'wayfaring', viz. contemplation and insight also command a keen attention of the early Buddhist sects with the result that a considerable number of controversies are related to these problems. The elements or aspects of *jhāna* were sought to be reclassified.[68] The nature of *samādhi* was also explored.[69] Similarly, the nature of *nirodha* was sought to be determined, whether it is worldly *(lokiya)* or extra-worldly *(lokottara)*.[70] There are also controversies about *vimutti* or emancipation.[71]

As we scrutinise different debates about the Path, discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*, the assertions, such as, about

entering the Path with exclamation or about the attainments in a dream or a womb acquire significance by the very nature of the point they want to make. That one may enter the Path as the result of spoken words constituted the fifth item of the five points of Mahādeva, whereby he, perhaps, means that one may enter the Buddhist way merely through words, rather than through one's experience. It might also refer to ritualistic formulae used to 'induce' the way as opposed to meditation. Debating the issue, the Theravādins suggest that their opponents held that the use of speech was necessary to entering into the meditations, which would clearly be contrary to the *Tripiṭaka*, or to entering on the way, which is less clearly so but which they interpret as meaning that by uttering the correct speech one enters the way regardless of one's actions, such as murder.[72] In all these controversies what is almost uniformly true is that different theses are affirmed on the basis of canonical passages attributed to the Buddha. The Theravādins emerge as the orthodox defendants and they seek to dispute these assertions on various grounds, mostly on the basis of their own interpretations of the Buddha-*vacana*. In short, these controversies again highlight the prevailing tendency to question existing beliefs and tenets.

It was the Buddhist *saṅgha* which naturally claimed to be the rightful body for interpreting the *Dhamma*. In the wake of growing tendency of debate over various crucial issues, the nature of the *saṅgha* itself was inevitably involved. Certain assertions were made by some of the sects emphasising an ideal and abstract nature of *saṅgha* as against the hard fact of its visible reality. A distinction between two basic types of *saṅgha* is made in the Buddhist texts. The first type, the 'present order' (*sammukhībhūta-saṅgha*), refers to an order that existed in a particular place and time. This type of an order had a certain geographical boundary (*sīmā*). Another type is called 'the order of the four quarters' or the 'universal

order' (*cāturdiśa-saṅgha*) and consisted of all the disciples of the Buddha. It transcended time and place and included the monks of the past, present and future; it encompassed all geographical areas; it continued for ever.[73]

For obvious reasons the continued growth of the *saṅgha* was natural in the centuries following the Buddha. As we go into details, we observe that, on the one hand, it was growing in strength and prosperity and, on the other, it was getting full with a number of rules, regulations, formalities and ceremonies. Specific rules were laid down with regard to the priority of accommodation in a *vihāra,* accepting an invitation from the lay-devotees and distribution of the robes, etc. gifted to the *saṅgha.* In laying down such rules Buddha seems to have well apprehended difficulties in these matters. The dispute at the second council arose with the acceptance of 'gold and silver' by the Vajjian *bhikṣus.*[74] This is a token of the range of economic change which had occurred in the course of a century and threatened to render the old rules, about acceptance of gifts, obsolete. Before the third council, again, we are told that some had entered the *saṅgha* merely to share in its material gains.[75] Thus, the issue of the appropriate mode of gifts to the order assumed importance and with it the radical sects appear to have raised the more fundamental question of the metaphysical nature of the *saṅgha* and of the spiritual significance of gifts to it. A certain section of the monks came to entertain such fundamental doubts as (a) whether or not the *saṅgha* could accept gifts at will? (b) whether or not the *saṅgha* could purify the gifts? (c) whether or not the *saṅgha* could enjoy the gifts given to it? and (d) whether or not the gifts given to the *saṅgha* brought any rewards? The Vetulyakas or Mahāsuññatāvādins came out with the suggestion that the *saṅgha* should not be supposed to do any of these things.[76]

As noted above, some of the Mahāsaṅghika group of schools were tending more and more towards an idealist

and absolutist conception. The nature of the Buddha was raised above humanity. So was the ideal of the Bodhisattva against the ideal of the Arhat. These developments later form the cardinal points of the Mahāyāna system. In this the Vetulyakas or Mahāsuññatāvādins had a major share. It was in conformity with their other doctrines that the Vetulyakas sought to idealise the notion of the *saṅgha* also. They did not subscribe to the old view that the *saṅgha* was a body of individuals. For them, behind the apparent assembly of the *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs,* there is an abstract and ideal notion of the *saṅgha* which makes it a conceptual and not an actual entity as the Theravādins, believed. The acceptance of such a radical notion would doubtless have had a disastrous effect, materially speaking, on the *saṅgha* and the monks. If the order cannot accept gifts, or if even when a gift is made to the *saṅgha,* it cannot purify it or pay back any spiritual reward to the person who makes the gift, and if it is a mistake to think that the *saṅgha* enjoys the gift in any sense, who would make an utterly empty sacrifice by way of any gift to the order? That such a thesis should then have been put forward leads seriously to the suspicion that its propounders were more than indifferent to the problems of the authorities of the *saṅgha* who ran it materially speaking.

The points which the Vetulyakas are trying to make do not seem to lack a basis. There would hardly be a difference of opinion even among the Buddhists themselves that the *saṅgha* stood for the practice of the Path and obtaining the fruits thereof. This was the essential nature of the order. It was very much open for any one to presume that this side alone should be taken into account as against its real form as a body of individuals. It may be observed here that an intimation of ideality of the *saṅgha* peeps through a certain statement of the Buddha himself. It is recorded that once Assaji was asked as to who was his religious *guru* and he replied, 'I accepted religious mendicancy under the

guidance of Lord Buddha.'[77] This statement clearly indicates that in the beginning the Buddha was regarded as the head of his *saṅgha.* A position totally inconsistent with the above is met with in an episode described in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta.* Therein Ānanda expresses the hope that the Lord will not pass into Parinirvāṇa till he has said something concerning the *bhikṣu saṅgha.* The Buddha, however, refused to say anything and observed that he never thinks that he should lead the *saṅgha* or that it is under his guidance.[78] This statement of the Buddha seems to imply an ideal form of *saṅgha* for which he thinks there can be no *śāstā* or head.

Among the eighteen early Buddhist sects Vātsīputrīyas, later known as Vātsīputrīya-Sammitīyas, form one of the most prominent, as well as the most controversial school. The *Pāli* and Sanskrit traditions place its origin in the second century after the Nirvāna of the Buddha, that is to say, prior to the third council held in the reign of Aśoka.[79] The Sammitīyas ascribed the origin of their school to Mahākaccāyana, a famous monk of Avanti. This establishes their close connection with Avanti and gives them an alternative name, i.e. Āvantakas. Early notices of the existence of this sect, especially the vigorous criticism of their radical theory about a conceptual self *(prajñapti-sat-pudgala)* apart from the five *skandhas,* are preserved in the *Kathāvatthu,*[80] Nāgārjuna,[81] Vasubandhu,[82] Śāntarakṣita,[83] etc. The treatises on Buddhist sects written by Bhavya, Vasumitra and Vinītadeva also record the basic tenets of the Vātsīputrīya-Sammitīyas. Two inscriptions, datable respectively to the 2nd and 4th centuries AD, notice the presence of Sammitīyas in Mathurā and Sārnāth. The Sārnāth inscription, inscribed on the Aśokan pillar below his edict, shows that Sārnāth had first been a centre of the Theravādins and subsequently that of the Sarvāstivādins. By about the third or the fourth century AD, however, the Sammitīyas became more powerful than the

Sarvāstivādins at Sārnāth. The Vātsīputrīya-Sammitīyas appear to have been the most wide-spread Buddhists in the time of Harṣavardhana (606-647 AD) when Yuan-Chwang visited India.[84] Yuan-Chwang informs us that he carried to China 15 treatises of this school, while I-tsing speaks of its separate *Vinaya* text.[85] Their only treatise, containing tenets of the sect, extant in Chinese translation, is the *Sammitīyaśāstra* or *Sammitīyanikāyaśāstra*.[86]

An elder monk named Vātsīputra is said to have prepared a new recension of the *Abhidharma* in nine sections, which seems to be irretrievably lost. It was presumably in this that he formulated his special doctrine about the 'person' *(pudgala)*. The Theravāda school, thus, divided over the question, whether this phenomenon, the 'person', should be reckoned as a real phenomenon among those listed in the *Abhidharma* and at the ultimate (*paramārtha*) level of statement, or whether it is merely used in conventional language, like 'self' or 'soul' or 'being'. The followers of Vātsīputra accepted the 'person' to be a reality at least in a certain sense. They held the view that in addition to the impersonal *dharmas* (i.e. elements composing a being) there is still a '*pudgala*' (person, jiva or self) to be reckoned with. This '*pudgala*' can be got at (*upalabbhati*) as reality in the ultimate sense (*paramaṭṭhena*) and it can become the object of true experience (*saccikaṭṭha*).[87] Further, the '*pudgala*' is neither identical with nor different from the *skandhas*. The relationship between the two is said to be indefinable (*avaktavya*). The '*pudgala*' is a kind of substance which provides a common ground for the successive processes occurring in a self-identical individual. It also extends over many lives, and not only is it the same '*pudgala*' who reappears again in every new rebirth, but it is also the same '*pudgala*' who is first an ordinary man and then, at the end, totally transformed by Nirvāṇa.[88] They emphasised,

therefore, the identity of the man who had won salvation with the man who had sought it.

The Pudgalavādins qoute the Buddha who, at times, expressed himself in such terms which would lend support to a personalist construction. For example, the Buddha had said: 'This sage Sunetra, who existed in the past, that Sunetra was I'.[89] Similarly, 'in the past I have had such a body'.[90] The question was, whether he was just using every day language in speaking to hearers who would not understand a philosophical statement, or whether he assumed any sort of reality apart form the groups, the senses and the various mental phenomena counted in the *Abhidharma*. In the opinion of the Pudgalavādins, however, transmigration is inconceivable without a '*pudgala*'. 'He rejects one body and takes up another.'[91] The existence of '*pudgala*' as upheld by the Pudgalavādins is formulated as an identity in difference, that is to say, a unity in combination with the diversity of states. It is the '*pudgala*' which exists and survives the change in psycho-physical elements. The '*pudgala*' is thought out as a mechanical and organic whole. They argue that in each individual there are a number of factors which appear to survive the fleeting moments, e.g. memory. How is it possible for a thought-moment which has instantly perished to be remembered later; how can it remember and how can it recognise? There must be an 'I' which first experiences and then remembers what it has done. A similar reasoning is also applied to *karman* and its retribution.[92] Moreover a '*pudgala*' is needed to provide an agent or instrument for the activities of an individual. It is the '*pudgala*' who sees, the eye being merely the instrument.[93] If there were no '*pudgala*' the practice of friendliness would be unthinkable.[94] Is it possible to be friendly to a conglomeration of impersonal and unsubstantial elements? According to the Pudgalavādins, the denial of appearance requires reason. And for them, '*pudgala*' is such an

appearance whose denial is difficult to be substantiated by cogent reasons. It is in this strain that they argue that if a '*pudgala*' were not there who indeed would fare through the beginningless *saṁsāra*?[95] They cite further: 'One person' (*eka-pudgala*) when he is born in the world is born for the weal of the many.[96] Who is that one 'person'? It is the Tathāgata.[97] Similarly, we have: 'After he has been reborn seven times at the most, a '*pudgala*' puts an end to suffering, and becomes one who has severed all bonds'.[98] Then there are some *suttas* classifying the '*pudgala*'. Even in the *Abhidharma* the eight types of saints are generally known as the 'eight personages' (*pudgalas*). Special attention is also drawn to the *Bhārahārasūtra*[99] which provides the Pudgalavādins their strongest argument. On the basis of this *sūtra* the Pudgalavādins contend that *bhāra* (burden) refers to the *skandhas* (constituents) while the *hāra* (carrier) is the '*pudgala*'. If *bhāra* (*skandhas*) included *hāra* (*pudgala*) there was no need of distinguishing the two and so '*pudgala*' exists apart from the *skandhas.*

The Pudgalavādins also adduce some positive arguments of a philosophical chāracter.[100] If there were no '*pudgala*' how can the omniscience of the Buddha be explained? If all acts of knowledge were instantaneous, none could know all things. A lasting personality, on the other hand, would provide a possible basis for omniscience. It is further pointed out that if '*pudgala*' is only a word to designate the five *skandhas* then why did the Buddha not identify *jīva* with *śarīra*? Similarly, why did the Buddha declare '*pudgala*' to be indeterminable or indefinable? If it did not exist, then why did he not say in clear terms that '*pudgala*' does not exist at all? Like all other Buddhists, they, no doubt, rejected the Brāhmaṇical concept of an eternal soul, but, at the same time, they also rejected the orthodox Theravāda theory that a living being is nothing but the five groups and the senses. Between the two alternatives, however, they seem to have

found it difficult to define what a person could be as a subject which continued and transmigrated. It was like one of those oft-mentioned undetermined questions to which there was no categorical answer. They admitted, it appears, that the 'person' could not be regarded as different from the five groups, but held also that it was not the same as the groups. No predicate could be applied to it. Yet it could be cognised by the six kinds of consciousness (of the six senses) and it (alone) transmigrates from the one body of the five groups to another.[101]

The Vātsīputrīya-Sammitīyas' assertion about the existence of '*pudgala*', in addition to the impersonal *dharmas,* caused a stir in the Buddhist community. The Pudgalavādins were described by other Buddhists as heretics or 'outsiders in their midst' and subjected to a 'ceaseless polemics'. The *Kathāvatthu* presents the detailed debate between the Theravādins and the Pudgalavādins. The Sarvāstivāda and Mādhyamika criticism of this thesis are also extant in the treatises of the two schools, *e.g. Vijñānakāya* and *Mādhyamika Kārikas,* respectively. In disputing the '*pudgala*' theory the Theravādins lay down that the use of such terms as '*pudgala*', 'being' etc., in their conventional sense, as was done by the Buddha while preaching the laity, by no means confers upon the transient aggregates, designated by the same terms collectively, any ultimate or philosophical reality. The existence of '*pudgala*' as assumed by the Pudgalavādins is simply untenable for the reason that it cannot be classed in any of the categories of reals.

The Sarvāstivādins did not deny the reality of the empirical individual (*pudgala*).[102] But whatsoever be designated by such terms as personality, ego, self, individual, etc. the underlying idea within all these is not that of a real and ultimate fact. They all denote a mere name for a multitude of inter-connected facts.[103] With the development of *Abhidharma* resulting in deep and complex psychological

analysis, this idea was sought to be carried to its logical end. Man came to be just an aggregate of causally connected elements and the analysis rendered him threadbare into *skandhas, āyatanas* and *dhātus*. There is no soul apart from feelings, ideas, volitions, etc. This doctrine is examined at length in two chapters of the *Mādhyamika Kārikas (Pūrva Parīkṣā* and *Agnindhāna Parīkṣā).*

The origin and rationale of the '*pudgala*' doctrine seems to pose a complex problem involving exegetic, historical and philosophical issues. Exegetic issues relate to the interpretative side of the original teachings of the Buddha. And this seems to be of prime importance referring to the early Buddhist controversy on '*pudgala*'. An analysis of the *Nikāya* data would indicate that the Buddha did not, perhaps, deny the 'self' in every sense in absolutely clear terms. When asked directly, he is reported to have refused to answer the question about the existence of self, either positively or negatively.[104] He carefully avoided a categorical answer to the question: 'Does the *attā* exist? Or does it not exist'?[105] Instead the problem of 'self' was left over as indeterminable or indefinable by the Buddha.[106] As against this there are such textual passages which preserve almost unambiguous reference to a doctrine of *anattā*. The doctrine lays down that there is nothing in the physical or mental realms which may properly be called one's self.[107] This of itself does not, however, mean the denial of all self whatever, but only of the phenomenality of the self. What is meant here is that any of the *skandhas* may be mistaken for the self *(attā)* and not perhaps the denial of the existence of self *(attā)* as such. Added to this, there occur in the *Nikāyas* such compound terms for self *(attā)* as *ajjhattā, paccattā, attābhava, pahitattā* and *bhāvitatta* which seem to be used in a sense different from that of a man as a complex of body and mind only.[108] Similarly, the term '*pudgala*' is of frequent occurrence in the *Nikāyas*. For example, Gopā Arhat is said

to have insisted on the existence of *ātman*. Gopā Arhat, the author of *Abhidharma-Vijñānakāya-pāda* is supposed to have existed a hundred years after the Buddha. It is pertinent to note that obscurity of the canonical position on the subject has also kept the scholars sharply divided. Although a number of them have upheld the view that a clear and unambiguous *anattā* doctrine has been preached by the Buddha, there is another section of scholars which disputes this assumption and holds that Buddha did not deny the existence of *attā,* and that the *anatta* doctrine originated owing to the scholastic encrustations of later monks. C.A.F. Rhys Davids has enthusiastically championed this view.[109]

It may be observed that the growth of the *Abhidharma* system meant a rigorous analysis of *anicca* and *anattā* doctrines. With the development of *Abhidharma* the essentials of the Buddha's teachings appear to have been reduced to a *dharma* theory as it emerged in its most uncompromising form. The Abhidharmists, by insisting that only isolated momentary events are real, held on to processes to the exclusion of all substance, and glorified in denying the relative unity. It is not unlikely that the Pudgalavādins in their insistence on the existence of '*pudgala*' appear to represent a reaction against the depersonalising tendency of the Abhidharmists. The Abhidharmists are known to have advocated the idea of *pudgala-nairātmya* with an equal enthusiasm. The utter denial of all self was bound to give rise to grave philosophical difficulties, especially about the nature of the Buddha and memory. Similarly, if there is no self or *jīva* at all, how is the theory of transmigration to be accounted for? The Theravādins, Sarvāstivādins, etc. insisted that *citta* and *caitasika dharmas* perish at every moment; in that case, what is that which retains mental experience? Further, the facts that a person acts or thinks as one and not as many separate things, that in many passages the Buddha does actually use the word '*so*' '*attā', 'puggala'* and that a

person's attainment like sotāpannahood (*sotāpatti*) continues to be the same in different births, and one speaks of his past births and so forth, all these do lead to the conclusion that, beside the five *skandhas,* there exists some mental property which forms the basis of I-ness and maintains the continuity of *karman* from one existence to another. The Vātsīputrīya-Sammitīyas came to uphold the existence of '*pudgala*' in order, perhaps, to meet aforesaid difficulties. Their notion of '*pudgala*' or self is, however, altogether different from the Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika and other Brāhmaṇical systems as also from the worldly '*pudgalas*' of the Sarvāstivāda. They seem to have divided the earlier and contemporary theories of *ātman* or '*pudgala*' into two categories, *viz.*, (1) '*pudgala*' as identical with the *skandhas* and (2) '*pudgala*' as different from the *skandhas*. They rejected both and established their own category of '*pudgalas*', according to which, a '*pudgala*' is neither identical with the *skandhas* nor different from the *skandhas.*

A similar departure from the original doctrines was due to the Sarvāstivāda assertion that everything exists *(sarvaṁ asti)*, giving rise to the crucial issue: Do all natural elements, whether past, present or future exist? The sect derives its name from the doctrine which lays down the ultimate nature of fundamental elements, entities or essences *(dharmāḥ)*. The doctrine of timeless and underived character of the specific essences is unique to the Sarvāstivādins and here we find an extreme form of emphasis on the analysis and definition of elements, so that there may not be any further illusion about their nature.[110] It seems that the formulation of the doctrine of momentariness of *dharmas* in its uncompromising form was beset with some insurmountable difficulties which the monks were bound to feel, especially after the demise of the Buddha. The foremost difficulty was felt with regard to the doctrine of *karman* and its results. How can a *dharma* cause an effect after it has itself vanished

from the scene?[111] Secondly the 'wayfarers' are said to acquire a number of possessions which seem to survive even after the moment of their acquisition. Also there are mental states which seem to last longer than one moment, e.g. *saṁsakāras* or *anuśayas* of a particular individual. It seems to have led to the apprehension that not only actualities but potentialities are real. In view of these difficulties, enquiries were made to find out the exact duration of an event, i.e. how long it lasts. A difference of opinion arose among the Sarvāstivādins, the Theravādins and the Sautrāntikas, as the first two sects upheld that an event lasts for three, four or even more moments, whereas the last sect upheld the persistence of an event for just one moment.[112] According to the Sarvāstivādins, each single conditioned event must go through four moments, i.e. (a) birth or origination (*utpatti*), (b) subsistence (*sthiti*), (c) decay (*jarā*), (d) destruction (*maraṇa*).[113] These inevitable four *lakṣaṇas* are, however, held to be compatible both with momentariness and with Sarvāstivāda.

When the difficulties of the doctrine of momentariness were realised, it became necessary to introduce new concepts to make amends. Just as the dogmatic assertion of the non-existence of a 'self' had to be supplemented by some 'pseudo-selves', so the dogmatic assertion of impermanence could be made credible only by introducing certain 'pseudo-permanencies'. Thus, developed the 'pan-realism' of the Sarvāstivādins in the course of reinterpreting and readjusting the original teachings of the Buddha.[114] As a natural corollary to this development, there arose an uncompromising debate among the monks of different dispositions. The Sarvāstivāda assertion became a target of bitter condemnation at the hands of the Theravādins and others. It was pointed out that the Sarvāstivāda tends to a kind of eternalism, the absolute self-being of the multiple specific elements, and that with this they fail to conform to

the doctrine of change or becoming,[115] which was said by the Buddha to be the original nature of things. The Sautrāntikas were equally critical of the Sarvāstivāda thesis.[116] According to them, the Sarvāstivādins fail to distinguish between the essence which they take as non-temporal and the function which is temporal, and consequently fail to distinguish between composite and incomposite. They mistake the continuations of the past to mean its everlastingness and hence its self-being. Further, they mistake the fact-hood of the object of cognition to mean its substantiality and self being (*svabhāva*) and fail to draw a clear line of distinction between existence and non-existence. They also fail to provide for negation and error or illusion and mistake relative existence to mean absolute self-being.[117]

Buddhist thought is primarily ethical but at the same time its ethics is inextricably blended with psychology. The true spiritual force of Buddhism lies in its emphasis on immediate experience and the rejection of everything that might make one lose what is essential and supreme in life. The Buddhist analysis of consciousness eliminated the soul-seeking to explain the mental phenomena in terms of the law of dependence which postualated physical objects including the physical body as constituted of *dhammas*. With the development of *Abhidhamma*, the analytical process resulted in the long lists of elementary *dhammas* so as to enable one to see beyond the apparent unity of persons and things, which would lead him to altogether dispense with the notion of self. The first book of the *Pāli Abhidhamma* begins with a significant remark, 'when a healthy conscious attitude, belonging to the world of sensuous relatedness, accompanied by and permeated with serenity and linked with knowledge has arisen...'[118] On the results of psychological analysis, Buddhism sought to base the whole rationale of its practical doctrine and discipline. From

studying the processes of attention, and the nature of sensation, the range and depth of feeling and the plasticity of will in desire and in control, it organised its system of practical self-culture.[119]

In the history of Buddhism the *Abhidhamma* stage may aptly be described as its rational phase grounded essentially in its psycho-ethical attitude. The *Kathāvatthu*, discusses a number of assertions related to a variety of psycho-ethical problems, e.g. consciousness[120] ts duration, structure and functions; *anuśayas*,[121] virtues[122] and *kamma*.[123] The text, however, preserves the debates on these issues in the most haphazard manner insofar as they are scattered throughout the different sections of the work. The variety of the problems, as also their distribution, makes it increasingly difficult to group them together and to draw their combined significance. We have, elsewhere, tried to group them together on the basis of some connection in the import of the different theses and have drawn the significance of individual issues along with their discussion.[124]

The *Kathāvatthu* presents two concise but highly significant debates on the concept of Nirvāṇa (*Nibbāna*). As a matter of fact, from the earliest times there has been a remarkable difference of opinion over the nature of Nirvāṇa as taught by the Buddha. It seems that such debates have primarily arisen from two basic paradoxes – (1) (a) On the one hand, the denial of a permanent self seems to imply that Nirvāṇa should be the extinction of personal life, (b) on the other, if Nirvāṇa is simply an extinction, this would, like *ucchedavāda*, tend to discourage spiritual life. Who would make such a Nirvāṇa the goal of spiritual effort? (2), Similarly, if impermanence is a necessary mark of the real, if the efficient or causally efficacious and hence the changing and transitory phenomena alone are real, what would be the status of Nirvāṇa which is held to be unchanging and eternal? Diverse pronouncements were made about Nirvāṇa in the *Nikāya*

texts. And yet it was labelled as indescribable and ineffable, indeterminate and inexpressible, which makes the notion more mystical and more elusive, almost as if all conceptions of Nirvāṇa were misconceptions. However, it was never meant to debar the monks from reflecting and interpreting the nature of Nirvāṇa.

It is evident from the foregoing discussions that the new developments in the Buddhist thought, as debated in the *Kathāvatthu*, are generally grounded in the *suttas* of the *Pāli* canon. In the first debate on Nirvāṇa, for example, the Pubbaseliyas quote from the *Majjhima Nikāya*. However, as the *sutta*-passage, quoted by them, refers to a non-Buddhist view of Nirvāṇa, their argument is rendered ineffective.[125] In the second debate the Theravādins take the stand that the idea of grasping Nirvāṇa, as some object involving a mental process of adverting, reflecting, etc. cannot be sustained. In fact, Nirvāṇa is peace, the stilling of all mind-activity.[126] The Theravādins do not eschew the idea of blissfulness or pure happiness as characterising the nature of Nirvāṇa. Curiously enough, instead of a denial, they have maintained this idea in unambiguous terms. Nirvāṇa is peace, cool and bliss; one who sees it in sorrow cannot attain liberation.[127] Similarly, it is said: Health is the highest gain, Nirvāṇa the highest bliss.[128] Buddha is an experiencer of highest bliss.[129] In the *Milindapañha*, it is described as *paramaṁ sukhaṁ*.[130] Nevertheless, as we have it in the *Kathāvatthu*, the Theravādins seek to controvert the Andhaka view that Nirvāṇa is morally good (*kuśala*). The Theravāda stand-point is, perhaps, properly represented when they say that Nirvāṇa is ethically (*avyākṛta*), i.e. indeterminate,[131] or that Nirvāṇa is neither black nor white,[132] i.e. it involves the transcendence of merit and demerit. On the other hand, the Andhakas too do not lack canonical support, e.g. Nirvāṇa is the destruction of attachment, aversion and confusion, i.e. a state of mind

devoid of *akuśala* (evil) roots.[133] One may quite logically assume that whatever is devoid of *akuśala* must be said to be *kuśala* (good). It is interesting to note that the Sarvāstivādins have to make a specific mention of this fact that Nirvāṇa is *kuśala*.[134]

It seems that difference of opinion on the conception of Nirvāṇa did not cease with occasional debates among the Andhakas and the Theravādins. The issue was yet hotly discussed later among the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas. One of the issues debated centred over the fact, whether the unconditioned Nirvāṇa has a course and an effect or none. However, the central controversy continued to be over the relation of Nirvāṇa to the categories of 'existence' and 'non-existence.' The difference of opinion between the Sarvāstivādins, the Theravādins and the Mahīśāsakas, on the one side, and the Sautrāntikas, on the other, led to prolonged debate as to whether Nirvāṇa is existent (*dravya*) or non-existent (*abhāva*).[135] The Theravādins, the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahīśāsakas upheld the former idea while the Sautrāntikas subscribed to the latter. According to the Sarvāstivāda or Vaibhāṣika conception, Nirvāṇa is real and eternal. It is the *dharmasvabhāva* which remains on the cessation of *dharmalakṣana*. It is impersonal, and inexplicable. One may note a similar idea as contained in the *Milindapañha*, according to which, Nirvāṇa is discerned by a pure and exalted mind; the holy disciple who has progressed rightly actually sees Nirvāṇa.[136] The Sautrāntika view is diametrically opposed to this which holds that Nirvāṇa is not a real and distinct entity but the mere absence of one.[137] It is the mere non-existence of the five *skandhas*, and, thus, one cannot attribute a separate existence to this non-existence. May one not suggest at this juncture that the Sautrāntikas' negative conception of Nirvāṇa was, perhaps, derived from such utterances in the *sutta*s where its references would appear to reflect a character of just

nothing–whatever (*akiñcanaṁ*).[138] Perhaps an additional incentive and the more recent one for the opposite pronouncements was provided by the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins themselves through their Abhidharmist endeavour to define the miraculous in strictly rational terms which was giving rise to a deadlock and landing thought into insuperable difficulties. The Sautrāntikas admittedly represent a reaction to the commentatorial tradition which under the Vaibhāṣikas appeared to be acquiring a Sāṅkhyan, 'eternalist' flavour. The Sautrāntikas, on the contrary, adopted a very critical philosophical attitude and, applying *Occam's Razor* ruthlessly, reduced many of the accepted *dharmas* to mere names and abstractions (*prajñapti*).

Beside the above debate on the one accepted unconditioned, there was a growth of the notion of several unconditioned items. These new unconditioned items were propounded by sects generally of the Mahāsaṅghika group. But the Theravādins are not able to reconcile to the new hypotheses and hence we have a series of polemics on the so-called unconditioned items. Except for the last two sections, the entire sixth book of the *Kathāvatthu* is devoted to them. Further, some others have been taken up for debate in the nineteenth book. We have, thus, discussions on assurance (*niyāma*), causal genesis (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), four immaterial spheres (*āruppas*), attaining to cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*), etc. which are all advocated by one or the other sect to be unconditioned and squarely challenged by the Theravādins.[139]

Though disputes and dissensions in the *saṅgha* may be undesirable from the orthodox point of view, they evidently reflect the deep interest taken by its members in ascertaining the real teachings of the Buddha, as also of the attempts to interpret the old teachings in a new way, and to adapt them to the changed circumstances brought about by the advancement of knowledge for over a century or so. It is

only with the development of new ideas that fresh interpretations were being given by the disciples on the original sayings of the Buddha, most of which appeared in the *Pāli Piṭaka*. Different sects, while engaging in protracted debates, take recourse to citations from the canon as required to substantiate or dispute a point. While the controversies among the sects identified each group doctrinally, it seems unlikely that in the beginning these differences led to major rifts or parting of ways in the *saṅgha*, with the exception of the great schism between the two trunk schools of the Theravāda and the Mahāsaṅghika; and even then, there is evidence that monks of both sects often lived together in a single monastery. Among the doctrinal controversies, however, we can discern the seeds of future dissensions.

Taking a panoramic view of the doctrinal developments that took place during this period, the following appear to have been the leading questions that exercised the sectarian thought: (i) Are Buddhas transcendental (*lokottara*)? (ii) Whether every word of the Buddha could free the hearer from *saṁsāra*? (iii) Are all the dialogues direct (definitive) statements, or are some indirect statements requiring special interpretation? Thus, when the contradictions in the canon were noted the question of distinguishing the *nitārtha* (profound) from the *neyārtha* (superficial) *sūtras* was raised. Still later, it led to the theory of the truths in the Satyasiddhi school which is supposed to be transitional between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. (iv) Can an Arhat relapse again into worldly entanglements? (v) Is the 'person' (*pudgala*), an expression used by the Buddha in the *suttas,* a real entity which, moreover, transmigrates from one living body to a new one, or is this just a conventional expression, to be replaced by strict analysis? (vi) If not the 'person', then do the groups (*skandhas*) of elements transmigrate? (vii) Is progress in understanding the truth gradual or does insight come all at once? (viii) Do all natural elements (*dharmas*),

whether past, present or future, exist? (ix) Are all forces (*saṁsakāras*) momentary? (x) Can good conduct grow unconsciously? Similarly, with the question about the transcendentality (*lokottaratā*) of the Buddha arose problems of the manner of his birth and relations of the *saṅgha.* Other issues, such as, the problem of *antarābhava,* the nature of *anuśaya* or dormant passions, the functioning of *vijñāna,* the number of *asaṁskṛtas,* the order of *bhāvanā* and *abhisamaya* were also raised. Disputes and controversies among sects over ritual practices were also not uncommon. The Mahīśāsakas, for example, claimed that there is more merit in worshipping and making offerings to the *saṅgha* than in worshipping a *stūpa,* as the latter merely contains the remains of a member of the *saṅgha* who is no more. On the contrary, the Dharmaguptas thought that there is more merit in worshipping a *stūpa,* because the Buddha's past and his present state (in Nirvāṇa) are far superior to that of any living monk.

An examination of the new developments in Buddhism suggests that the sects seem to have been agreed on the basic doctrines that the Buddha had taught. Almost each sect also depended heavily on the authority of words and texts occurring in the *Tripiṭaka.* In the course of their arguments and counter-arguments they repeatedly cited passages from the canon. However, it is only in the background of new ideas that fresh interpretations were being given, by different sects, to the original sayings of the Buddha. The resultant developments of the sectarian conflagration, such as, the rise of docetism among the Mahāsaṅghika schools and later, in the Mahāyāna and corresponding decline and delimitation of the authority of Arhats, the emergence of Pudgalavāda among the Vātsīputrīyas, Sarvāstivāda and *Dharma* theory mainly in the Abhidharmas of Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda and so on, were bound to have deep impact on the future course of the

history of Buddhism. The Theravāda school is regarded as the transmitter of ancient or primitive Buddhism. The very name Theravāda is derived from *sthavira* or *thera* which in *Pāli* means the old or senior and is, thus, considered to be the orthodox or conservative section of early Buddhists. Along with most of its sub-sects it is not concerned with metaphysical problems but man in his psychosomatic components, because it is only through his awareness of their interrelation, combination and operation, and of the way to cultivate some and suppress others that he can arrive at the state of an Arhat. The Mahāsaṅghikas, on the other hand, emphasise on a more open community, a less strict version of the discipline, and a metaphysical view of the Buddha. Evidently, they were the earliest school of the Hīnayāna tradition to show a tendency for conceiving the Buddha docetically. In their view, the Buddha is transcendental (*lokottara*), indestructible and completely devoid of all worldly impurities. His body is perfect, for the body through which he reveals himself is not his true body; it is, in fact an appartitional body (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the Buddha. Even in the state of a Bodhisattva, prior to his final birth, the Buddha entered the maternal womb completely pure. The Bodhisattvas can remain as long as they will, among the inferior creatures, i.e. beasts, demons etc., for the purpose of leading creatures to salvation. The docetic ideas of the Mahāsaṅghika school were brought to completion by its offshoots, viz. Vetulyakas, Andhakas, Uttarāpathakas and above all the Lokottaravādins, a befitting name.

It is an agreed fact that a truly transcendental conception of the Buddha emerged fully with the development of Mahāyāna. Therein the Buddha came to be regarded as quasi eternal god sending illusory images down to this earth to preach the norm. The Mahāyānists see in him one of the Buddhas residing in various Buddha-lands and influencing believers. Thus developed the *Trikāya* doctrine under the

formulation of which the transcendental conception of the Buddha was carried to its farthest limits. But such a conception of the Buddha poses an enigmatic problem if it were to be taken to have emanated suddenly without plausible antecedents. It is so widely removed in its nature as also from the chronological point of view from the early conception that one cannot perhaps explain it merely as a sudden and new development. Obviously, such an idea of the apotheosis of the Buddha could not have flashed upon the minds of monks of the first century BC overnight. In all probability it was an outcome of a gradually developing process of which the commencement and culmination respectively coincided with the rise of the Mahāsaṅghikas, on the one hand, and that of the Mahāyāna on the other, leading to the virtual deification of the Buddha. It seems that the process of mytholising began soon after the passing away of the Master and found many adherents outside the pale of strictly orthodox teachers. Basically they seem to have been motivated by a devotional attitude towards the Master and developed philosophical speculations in the same direction. The new Buddhological conception, as reflected in the assertions of the Mahāsaṅghikas and others may aptly be described as a half way house representing a transition between the two well-defined phases of Buddhism, viz. Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. The Pūrvaśailas had, similarly, arrived almost at the typically Mahāyānist position of making little distinction between 'persons' and 'phenomena'. More such examples can be cited to substantiate the point. That the Mahāsaṅghika school itself was not absorbed by the Mahāyāna Buddhism and continued to exist long after the emergence of the latter, as reported by the Chinese traveller I-tsing, does not preclude its contribution to the evolution of Mahāyāna. In fact, Mahāyāna authors like Paramārtha have unequivocally acknowledged their indebtedness to these so-called precursors of Mahāyāna.

NOTES

1. *Cullavagga,* p. 18.
2. David J. Kalupahana, *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism,* p. 155.
3. S.N. Dube, "The Date of Kathāvatthu," *East and West* (New Series, Vol. 22, Nos. 1-2, March June 1972) pp. 79–86.
4. J. Masuda, *loc. cit.* pp. 24, 36, 38, 52.
5. A. Bareau, "Trois Traitès sur les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Vehicule," *Journal Asiatique* (Tomme CCXLIV, 1956) II Partie, pp. 174, 179.
6. *Ibid.* p. 194.
7. L. de la Vallèe Poussin, "The Five Points of Mahādeva," *JRAS,* 1910, pp. 414 ff.; E. Lamotte, "Buddhist Controversy Over the Five Propositions," *Indian Historical Quarterly,* Vol. XXXII, Nos. 2-3, 1956, pp. 148–62; S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism,* pp. 92 ff.; L.S. Cousins, "The 'Five Points' and the Origins of the Buddhist Schools," *The Buddhist Forum,* School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Vol. II (1991) pp. 27 ff.
8. *Abhidharmakośa,* II p. 210.
9. Cf. *Kathāvatthu,* II. 1, II. 4.
10. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā,* pp. 24 ff.
11. J. Masuda, *loc.cit.*, pp. 24, 36, 38, 52; A. Bareau, "Trois Traitès," II Partie, pp. 174, 179, 194.
12. *Kathāvatthu,* 1.2; cf. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā,* p. 35.
13. S.N. Dube, "Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism," paper read at VIIth International Seminar held at East West International Centre, Honolulu, Hawaii (June 1995); "Delimitation of Arhat Ideal in Early Buddhism," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences : Journal of Inter University Centre,* IIAS, Shimla, Vol. X No. 1, Summer, 2003, pp. 35–49.
14. On the second council cf. G.C. Pande, *Bauddha Dharma ke Vikasa ka Itihasa*, pp. 169–175; N. Dutt, *EMB,* II, pp. 31-46; Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha and the Early History of His Order* (London, 1907) pp. 171–80; E. Obermiller, *Bu-ston*, Pt. II, pp. 96 ff; J. Masuda, *loc.cit.*, pp. 14 ff., A. Bareau, "*Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Vèhicule*" L. de la Vallèe Poussin, *ERE,* Vol. IV, s.v. Councils; *Indian Antiquary,* Vol. XXXVII, pp. 86 ff.
15. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *Śākya,* p. 355; G.C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism,* pp. 559–60.
16. *Dīpavaṁsa*, V, 30.
17. *Ibid.*, V, 37–38.
18. Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India,* I, pp. 267-68.
19. J.F. Minayeff, *Recherches sur le Bouddhisme,* p. 207.
20. *Saṁyutta Nikāya,* II, p. 309 ff.
21. *Sutta-nipāta*, p. 309.

22. *Itivuttaka*, p. 228.
23. *Sutta-nipāta*, pp. 353 ff.
24. *Mahāvagga*, pp. 18–23.
25. *Abhidharmakośa*, pp. VII 76–77.
26. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India,* p. 89.
27. *Dīgha Nikāya*, II, pp. 65 ff.
28. *Sphutārthābhidharmakośa-vyākhyā,* ed. U. Wogihāra, p. 5.
29. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya*, II, *Mahāpadānasutta*; *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Buddhavaṁsa.*
30. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, II, p. 41.
31. Cf. *Abhidharmakośa*, I.2; cf. Edward Conze, *op.cit.*, pp.166–73.
32. N.Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relations to Hīnayāna*, pp. 35 ff.; T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism,* pp. 280 ff.
33. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*, p. 76.
34. Cf. those sections of the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* in which Buddha appears as a human being, e.g. the illness of Buddha at Beluvāgrāma; the grief of Ānanda in the fifth section.
35. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, II, p. 341.
36. Cf. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.6.17, *Praśna Upaniṣad*, 6.2 *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 4.15.1; cf. also *Brahmajāla* and *Pāvāsi suttas* of *Dīgha Nikāya.*
37. *Majjhima Nikāya*, II, p. 174, cf. *Majjhima Nikāya Tevijjavacchagotta suttanta*, p. 173 ff.
38. *Cullavagga*, p. 425.
39. *Kathāvatthu*, II. 10, *Katthāvatthu-Aṭṭhakath*ā, p. 59.
40. J. Masuda, *loc.cit.* pp. 1–78.
41. *Kathāvatthu*, XXI, 4.
42. *Majjhima Nikāya*, III. p. 25.
43. *Kathāvatthu*, XVIII.1
44. *Ibid.*, XVII. 10; cf. S.N. Dube, "Development of Buddhist Apotheosis," *The Direction of Korean Buddhism* (Seoul, 1997) pp. 1281–1297.
45. Cf. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, II, p. 357.
46. J. Masuda, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21; A Bareau, "Trois Traitès", II Partie, p. 249.
47. Cf. *Yogabhāṣya ad Yogasūtras*, I, 24.
48. *Yogasūtras*, IV. 4; cf. G.N. Kaviraja, *Nirmāṇakāya in Saraswatī Bhawan Studies*, Vol. I.
49. *Bhagavadgītā*, IV. 9.
50. K.N. Upadhyay, *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 147 ff.
51. L.M. Joshi, *Discerning the Buddha*, pp. 116 ff.
52. *Mahāvastu*, pp. 145 ff.
53. Cf. *Lalitavistara*, pp. 181-84.
54. Cf. *Kathāvatthu*, IV. 7, XXIII. 3, IV. 8, XIII.4.
55. J. Masuda, *loc.cit.*, p. 21; cf. *Mahāvastu*, I, p. 145.
56. A. Bareau, "Trois Traitès," II Partie, pp. 153–74.
57. *Kathāvatthu*, XVIII. 1-2.

58. *Abhidharmakoś*a, III, p. 200.
59. *Lalitavistara*, p. 51, cf. *Mahāvastu*, I. p. 214.
60. Hardayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, p. 178; K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*, p. 315–16.
61. Cf. Paul Demièville, *op.cit.*, p. 15 ff.
62. *Kathāvatthu*, XI. 6.
63. *Ibid.*, XVIII. 5.
64. *Ibid.*, XX. 5.
65. Cf. *Ibid.*, I.5; V.2, 4, 10; IX. 7; XII. 5.
66. *Ibid.*,XXII. 4.
67. *Ibid.*, XXII. 5.
68. *Ibid.*, XVIII, 6-7.
69. *Ibid.*, XI. 6.
70. *Ibid.*, XV. 7-8
71. *Ibid.*, III. 3-4; V. 1; XIII. 5-6.
72. Cf. A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, pp. 216–17.
73. Cf. Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, pp. 63-64; G.S.P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya*, pp. 105; ff; S.N. Dube "The Notion of Early Buddhist Saṅgha," *Jijñāsā*, Vol. I, 1974.
74. *Cullavagga*, pp. 416 ff.
75. See *Dīpavaṁsa*, Chap. VII, *Mahāvaṁsa*, Chap. V; *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*, p. 5f.
76. *Kathāvatthu*, XVII, 6,7,9.
77. *Mahāvagg*a, p. 39.
78. Cf. '*Tathāgatassa kho Ānandan a evaṁ hoti, ahaṁ bhikkhu saṅghaṁ pariharissāmitī va maṁ uddesiko bhikkhu saṅgho ti vā'*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, II, p. 80.
79. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā*, pp. 2–3; J. Masuda, *op.cit.*, pp. 16–7; A. Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du petit Vèhicule*, pp. 33, 144.
80. *Kathāvatthu*, I. 1
81. *Mādhyamika Kārikas*, chapter IX-X.
82. *Abhidharmakośa*, Chap. IX.
83. *Tattvasaṁgraha.*
84. T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, I, pp. 20–21, 227, 331, 333, 359, 373; II, pp. 1,47, 191, 242, 247, 252, 256, 258–59.
85. Takakusu, *I-tsing*, pp. 7, 66, 140; see also Thich Thien Chau "The Literature of the Pudgalavādins", *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 7 no.1 (1984) pp. 7–40.
86. Translated in English by K. Venkata Ramanan in *Vishwabhāratī Annals*, Vol. V, 1952.
87. '*Puggalo upalabbhati saccikaṭṭhaparamatthenāti', Kathāvatthu* p. 3; *Abhidharmakośa*, IX p. 230; see also Thich Thien Chau, "Les Responses des Pudgalavādins aux critiques des ecoles bouddhiques", *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies,* 10, no. 1 (1987), pp. 33–53.

88. Cf. Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa,* p. 31n.
89. Cf. *Kathāvatthu-Aṭṭhakathā,* p. 23; *Abhidharmakośa* IX, p. 271.
90. *Abhidharmakośa,* IX, p. 253.
91. Ibid. V, pp. 259–60; cf. *Saṁyutta Nikāya,* III, p. 56.
92. *Kathāvatthu,* pp. 33ff; *Abhidharmakośa,* IX, p. 271.
93. *Abhidharmakośa,* IX, pp. 243ff.
94. *Vijñānakāya,* cf. *Etudes Asiatiques,* 1925, pp. 366–67; cf. also *Abhidharmakośa Vyākhyā,* p.11; *Bu-ston,* Pt.I, pp. 49-50.
95. *Abhidharmakośa,* IX, p. 271.
96. *Aṅguttara Nikāya,* I, p. 22.
97. *Abhidharmakośa,* IX, p. 259.
98. Cf. *Kathāvatthu,* XII, 5, 9.
99. Cf. *Saṁyutta Nikāya,* III, pp. 261–62.
100. *Abhidharmakośa,* IX, p. 25ff, 251ff.
101. A.K.Warder, *op.cit.,* pp. 240–41.
102. Masuda, *loc.cit.,* p. 50
103. Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism,* pp. 21–22.
104. *Saṁyutta Nikāya,* III, pp. 232ff, IV, p. 400.
105. Cf. *Majjhima Nikāya,* II, pp. 111–13.
106. Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya,* I, pp.134-37; *Saṁyutta Nikāya, Abyākta Saṁyutta.*
107. *Dīgha Nikāya,* II, pp. 51ff; *Majjhima Nikāya,* I, pp. 280ff, cf. III, pp. 81ff.
108. Cf. *Majjhima Nikā*ya, III, pp. 95, 98, 126, 297, 380.
109. Cf. for details S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism,* p. 253.
110. *Abhidharmakośa,* I, p. 1.
111. Cf. *Kathāvatthu,* pp. 122–26.
112. Cf. *Abhidharmakośa,* IV, pp. 7-8; cf. also Edward Conze, *op.cit.,* p. 134.
113. Masuda, *op.cit.,* p. 40; cf. also Waleser, *op.cit.,* p. 39.
114. Edward Conze, *op.cit.,* p. 138.
115. Cf. *Kathāvatthu,* pp. 112ff.
116. Cf. *Abhidharmakośa,* V, pp. 55ff; *Abhidharmakośa Vyākhyā,* p. 476f; Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism,* Appendix I, pp. 69–80.
117. Cf. also *Sammatīya Nikāya Śāstra, Visvabhārāti Annals,* Vol. V, p. 187; Masuda, *op.cit.,* pp. 54–55.
118. Cf. *Dhammasaṅgaṇi,* p. 18.
119. C.A.F.Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Psychological Ethics,* p. xvii.
120. Cf. *Kathāvatthu,* II, 7; III.11-12; IX, 6-7; X. 1; XXII. 10, etc.
121. Cf. *Ibid.,* IX. 4; XI. 1; XIV. 5.
122. Cf. *Ibid.,* X. 7-8; 10–11.
123. Cf. *Ibid.,* VII. 7-8; XII. 1-2; XVI. 8, etc.
124. S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism,* pp. 319ff.
125. *Ibid.,* p. 289.
126. Cf. *Aṅguttara Nikāya,* I, pp. 123–24; III, p. 378.

127. Cf. *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 77–78.
128. Cf. *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, pp. 452ff.
129. *Ibid.*, II, p. 4f
130. *Milindapañha*, pp. 72, 308, 317.
131. *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, pp. 294ff.
132. Cf. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I, pp. 146–47; IV, p. 16.
133. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, II, p. 223.
134. Poussin, *Bulletin de I'E' cole Franciaise d'Extreme Orient*, 1930, pp. 8-9; cf. *Abhidharmakośa*, IV, pp. 33–34.
135. Cf. *Abhidharmakośa*, II, pp. 278–87.
136. *Milindapañha*, pp. 309–310.
137. *Abhidharmakośa*, II, pp. 278–87; cf. *Satyasiddhiśāstra, Melanges Chinoises et Bouddhiques*, V, 1936-37, pp. 208–10.
138. Cf. *Sutta-nipāta*, pp. 366–67.
139. Cf. S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*, pp. 288 ff.

VIII

CONSOLIDATION OF OTHER ASCETIC ORDERS

No part of the history of Indian ideas and movements can be complete without some reference to Jaina thought and its contributions. Jainism is both a philosophy and a religion of India. Together with Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism is one of the three major religions that developed within the Indian civilisation. It is still a living faith in different parts of the country.[1] At times it has enjoyed royal patronage and has produced worthy monks and laymen of whom any society could be proud of. The Jaina contributions to Indian art and architecture, to the preservation and enrichment of Indian literature, and to the cultivation of languages, both Aryan and Dravidian are significant. The members of the Jaina ascetic institution devoted a major portion of their time to the study of scriptures and composition of fresh treatises for the benefit of suffering humanity. The importance of scriptures in the attainment of liberation (*Kaivalya jñāna*) and the emphasis on *śāstradāna* have enkindled an inborn zeal in the Jaina community for the composition and preservation of literary works, both religious and secular. The Jainas utilised the prevailing languages of the different times at different places for their religious propaganda, as well as for the preservation of knowledge. In this way, they exercised great influence on the development of Prākrit languages.Generations of Jaina monks have, thus, enriched, according to their taste, temperament and training, various branches of Indian literature. The Jainas must be given due

credit for the development of arts also in the country. They erected *stūpas,* as did the Buddhists, in honour of their saints, with their accessories of stone railings, carved and decorated gateways, stone umbrellas, elaborate artistic pillars and abundant statues. Early examples of these have been found at Mathurā.[2] The Jaina Āgamic texts, often refer to 72 *kalās* and 64 *gaṇiyaguṇas* and there is no doubt that all types of arts and crafts received tremendous patronage from the devoted Jainas. In fact, the Jaina narrative literature contains hundreds of stories about ladies, who were well-versed in all these arts and the dramatic art was especially popular among the Jainas from the earliest times. Most importantly, the religious instincts inculcated by Jainism have left an abiding impression on many aspects of Indian life.

The name Jainism derives from the term *Jina* ('conqueror' or 'victor'), applied to the 24 great religious figures (*Tīrthaṅkaras* or ford-makers across the stream of existence), on whose examples the religion is centred. The Jainas claim a great antiquity for their religion.[3] Ṛṣabhadeva is supposed to have been the earliest *Tīrthaṅkara,* who is mentioned even in the *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* as belonging to a very remote past. According to the Jaina tradition, Nemi or Neminātha, the twenty-second *Tīrthaṅkara,* who is said to have belonged to the same Yādava family as Kṛṣṇa led the order during the time of the Mahābhārata war. The order gathered particular strength during the eighth century BC under Pārśvanātha, the twenty-third *Tīrthaṅkara,* who was born at Varanasi. It is now an accepted fact that Pārśvanātha was a historical person.[4] His followers lived in the time of Mahāvīra, with whose disciples they held discussions. The parents of Mahāvīra were followers of the creed of Pārśvanātha. The origin of Jainism would, thus, go back to prehistoric times. It is to be sought in the fertile valley of the Gaṅgā where throve in the past, much before the advent of the Aryans with their priestly religion, a society of recluses

who laid great emphasis on individual exertion, practice of a code of morality and on devotion to austerities, sometimes of a severe type, as a means of attaining the religious goal. These recluses generally shared some fundamental ideas, such as a pessimistic outlook on life, a belief in man's potentiality to become god through his own exertions, an acceptance of the existence of soul or life in all things, the doctrines of transmigration of the spirit and *karman*, then conceived of as material, and its supreme force over the lives of all beings. Most of these ideas were later assimilated into the general stream of Indian thought. Jainism was at first considered as an offshoot of Buddhism; but now it passes as anterior to it. As noted above, it has grown up almost at the same time and very nearly from the same background whence Buddhism has come out. It also resembles Buddhism in certain doctrinal principles and monastic practices. But the divergences between the two movements are too glaring to blur the apparent similarities. Mahāvīra ('the Great Hero') known earlier as Vardhamāna in his family circles, the twenty-fourth and last of the *Tīrthaṅkaras*[5] was a senior contemporary of Buddha. He was born at Kuṇḍagrāma 250 years after Pārśvanātha, and this, according to a Jaina traditional era still current, corresponds to 599 BC His father Siddhārtha was the chief of Jñātṛkas of Kauṇḍanyapura near Vaiśālī. His mother was Triśalā Devī, the daughter of the Licchavi King of Vaiśālī. Vardhamāna had a reflective mind from the very childhood. Like other princes of the time, Vardhamāna also underwent education and training. But he soon realised the transitory nature of the world and became an ascetic at the age of thirty. For over twelve years he wandered from place to place, begging his food, meditating, disputing and subjecting his body to penance and self-mortification. In the thirteenth year of his asceticism Vardhamāna found full enlightenment and Nirvāṇa; was now possessed of 'boundless knowledge'

(*Kevalīn*) and became the 'unfettered one' (*Nirgrantha*) a 'worthy' (*Arhat*) a 'conqueror' (*Jina*) and 'ford-maker' (*Tīrthaṅkara*). He soon gained a great reputation and a large band of followers, preaching and spreading his tenets in Magadha, Aṅga, Mithilā and Kośala till his death at Pāvāpuri, thirty years later, at the age of seventy-two. There are conflicting traditions about the date of his death which ranges from 546 BC to 468 BC. A more probable date is suggested to be 527 BC, but even this date is open to certain objections.[6]

Little that may be taken as directly representing Mahāvīra's teachings seems to have survived. However, the remarkable conservatism characterising the history of Jainism through the centuries makes it probable that the fundamentals of the creed, as are found in the canon (*Āgamas*) 'are very old indeed and essentially those of Mahāvīra'.[7] Like Buddhism, Jainism also repudiates the authority or infallibility of the *Vedas*, and does not attach any importance to the performance of sacrificial ritual of the Brāhmaṇas. The Jainas believe that every object, even the smallest particle, possesses a soul (*Jīva*) endowed with consciousness. A very natural corollary of this doctrine was their scrupulous observance of non-injury (*ahiṁsā*) to every living being. Jainism is primarily a teaching of severe discipline grounded on the philosophical basis of the primordial duality and opposition of spirit, soul or living (*Jīva*) and matter, non-soul or non-living (*ajīva*). The living is already in contact with the non-living from beginningless time. This contact subjects the living being, owing to thoughts, words and acts, to the influx (*āśrava*) of fresh energies known as *karmas*, which are conceived as subtle matter. The naturally bright soul becomes dulled and clouded over by karmic matter and thus acquires first a spiritual and then a material body. The obfuscation of the soul is akin to the gradual clouding of a bright oily surface by specks of dust. *Karma* adheres to the soul as a result of

activity. Any and every activity induces *karma* of some kind, but deeds of a cruel and selfish nature induce more and more durable *karma* than others. The *karma,* already acquired, leads to the acquisition of further *karma* and the cycle of transmigration continues indefinitely.[8] Transmigration can only be escaped by dispelling the *karma* already adhering to the soul and by ensuring that no more is acquired. The process is supposed to be slow and difficult and it is believed that many souls will never succeed in accomplishing it, but will continue to transmigrate for all eternity. Jainism believes that the influx (*āśrava*) of *karmas* can be counteracted (*saṁvara*) by religious discipline; and the existing stock (*bandha*) of *karmas* can be exhausted (*nirjarā*) through severe austerities. There is then the possibility of salvation (*mokṣa*) and therein the living being reaches its pristine purity, divested of all that is alien to its nature. When the soul has finally set itself free it rises at once above the highest heaven to the top of the universe, where it resides in inactive omniscient bliss through all eternity. This, for the Jainas, is the state of *Kaivalya* or Nirvāṇa.

The way to *Kaivalya* or Nirvāṇa lies through the three jewels *(Triratna)* of right faith (*Samyag-darśana*) right knowledge (*Samyaga-jñāna*) and right conduct (*samyaga-charitra*). By following the three-fold path of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct souls will be released from transmigration and reach the pure and blissful abode, which is the goal of Jaina aspiration. Right faith includes freedom from doubts and desires, steadfastness, brotherhood towards fellow believers, and the propagation of its principles among others. Right faith leads to perfection only when followed by right conduct and there can be no virtuous conduct without right knowledge, which consists of clear distinction between the self and the non-self. Again right knowledge without faith and conduct is futile. Without purification of mind, all austerities are nothing but body torture. Right

conduct is, thus, spontaneous and gradual and not something forced or mechanical. As regards the components of right conduct, Pārśvanātha had enjoined on his disciples four great vows (*mahāvratas*), i.e. non-injury (*ahiṁsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*) and non-possession (*aparigraha*). To this Mahāvīra added a fifth one, viz., strict chastity (*brahmacharya*). The greatest emphasis was laid on *ahiṁsā*, which was made to include not only the non-injury or non-killing of living beings, but also the abandonment of all such acts which unintentionally lead to the destruction of human or animal life.[9] The Jaina principle of *ahiṁsā* is a logical outcome of its metaphysical theory that all souls are potentially equal. No one likes pain. Naturally, therefore, one should not do to others what one does not want others to do to oneself. In the domain of philosophical thought, it is this principle of equality and non-injury (*ahiṁsā*) to others (both psychologically and physically) that has given rise to the attitude of non-absolutism in thought (*anekāntavāda* or *syādvāda*), which respects opposite viewpoints regarding the same object.

From the account of the career of Mahāvīra it would appear that Mahāvīra was more of a reformer than the founder of a sect. 'What he did was, in all likelihood, the codification of an unsystematic mass of beliefs into a set of rigid rules of conduct for monks and laymen. A decided inclination towards enumeration and classification may be attributed to him.'[10] There can be no doubt that he had a winning personality, an organisational skill, and the drive of a reformer can be seen from the several royal followers he could win over for the spread of his *saṅgha.* Thus, very much like Buddhism, Jainism too enjoyed its own share of royal patronage and support from time to time. During his career, Mahāvīra is said to have travelled far and wide and ordained a number of kings, princes, tradesmen, high officials and common people. He exercised his influence in royal families

and the kings Ceḍaga (Cheṭaka)[11] Seṇiya (Bimbisāra)[12], Kuṇiya (Ajātaśatru)[13] Pradyota[14], Udayana[15], Dadhivāhana[16] and others are said to have become his devotees. Similarly, a number of queens, princes, princesses, ministers and merchants are also enumerated as his followers.[17] The Jainas claim that Dīpāvalī, or the festival of lamps, originated when the eighteen kings, who were present at the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra, lighted torches.

Mahāvīra's organisation (*saṅgha*) was open to one and all without any distinction of caste or creed. Mahāvīra preached to everyone who was willing to listen to him. Persons desiring to renounce the world and embrace the life of a monk or a nun were allowed to be admitted in the Jaina organisation. Not only ordinary people renounced the world but also warriors, bankers and others belonging to the upper class and reputed for their personal grace, learning, valour and splendour, joined the ascetic order. They renounced their family and wealth, and considering sensual pleasures worthless and life transitory like water-bubbles, exchanged the glitter and pomp of worldly life for the homeless state of ascetics. As, according to Mahāvīra, all were equal, he did not make any distinction between male and female and gave freedom to women by admitting them into the order.[18]

In order that everyone understood his teachings, he did not choose to speak in Sanskrit, the language of the elite classes, but in *Ardhamāgadhī*, the dialect of his home. Although, he was thoroughly ascetic in his views, he had an open mind to the needs of laymen. Endowed with profound knowledge of human nature, he had full realisation that hardships of the austerities and renunciation of the world could be sustained only by a selected few, and not by all and sundry. Like Pārśva and other masters, he, therefore, opened the doors of his community to laymen and laid down for them such norms of conduct which could be adhered to by

those who were leading a worldly life.[19] People disgruntled with the existing state of affairs around them, such as bloody political conflicts resulting in tyranny and lawlessness, domination of one class over another, the ruthlessness of criminal laws, the system of usury, disappointment in their cherished expectations, were driven away from the fleeting pleasures and deceptions of the world seeking solace and peace of mind in the solitude of a wood. The Jaina text *Ṭhānāṅga* outlines the ten causes of renunciation.[20] According to some scholars, the *yakṣapūjakas* of eastern India were the first to accept the religious system propounded by Pārśva and Mahāvīra. These *yakṣapūjakas* are taken to belong to the lower strata of the society.[21] Although, it is true that all the immediate disciples or *gaṇadharas* of Lord Mahāvīra were Brāhmins by caste but large majority of his followers were common people, a fact that finds support from early Jaina epigraphs found from Mathurā and other places.[22]

The Jaina movement owes much of its influence to the missionary zeal of Mahāvīra and to his ability to organise a coherent society of religious and lay believers. Mahāvīra's lineage, hailing as he did, to a semi-royal Kṣatriya dynasty of the Nāyas from his father's side and the Licchavis from his mother's side, put him in a very favourable position and we find him gathering a strong royal support in the cause of the spread of his religion. In the course of his wanderings he is said to have visited all the important cities and capitals of the contemporary kingdoms in Bihar, such as Champā in Aṅga, Mithilā in Videha, Rājagṛha in Magadha, etc. Bimbisāra of Magadha, whom the Jainas mention as Śreṇika, and who also patronised Buddhism, was considered by the Jainas as a special admirer of Mahāvīra.[23] Even his cruel son Ajātaśatru (Kuṇika), who is said to have starved the former to death, was a sympathiser of Jainism. The Jainas do not brand Ajātaśatru as a parricide. He is mentioned as often visiting Mahāvīra at Vaiśālī and Champā.[25] In the *Aupapātikasūtra*

he proclaims his faith in Mahāvīra.[26] It was during the reign of Ajātaśatru that both, Mahāvīra and Gautama Buddha, are said to have entered Parinirvāṇa. Ajātaśatru's son and successor Udāyī was also known for his sympathies towards Jainism. He is credited with the building of a Jaina temple in the heart of Pāṭaliputra.[27] During the reign of this ruler, Jainism is likely to have spread rapidly in different parts of Bihar. Ironically enough, the very favour which he had liberally showered on the Jainas proved to be the cause of his ruin. It is given to understand that a prince, whose father he had dethroned, plotted against his life. Aware of the easy access of Jainas to the palace of Udāyī, he entered it in the disguise of a Jaina monk and murdered him in the night. This happened some sixty years after the decease of Mahāvīra.

The dynasty of the nine Nandas had usurped the Magadhan throne of the Śaiśunāga kings almost at the time when Alexander the Great marched into India. The Nandas are somewhat ill-famed in Indian tradition on various counts, including the fact that the founder of the dynasty is described as the son of a barber from a courtesan.[28] Not only the Jaina tradition does not share the bad opinion about the Nanda kings but claims them to be favourably inclined towards their faith. The very fact of their non-Brāhmaṇical origin seems to support this claim. That Nandas were well-disposed to the Jaina religion finds epigraphical support from the rather mutilated Hāthīguṁphā inscription[29] of king Khāravela of Kaliṅga, which says that the king in the twelfth year of his reign brought back the image of the Kaliṅgajina which had been taken away by Nandarāja from Kaliṅga to Magadha.[30] The removing of the image of Jina from the capital of Kaliṅga to Pāṭaliputra may have been due to the Jaina faith of the Nanda king. Khāravela also had many caves excavated in the Kumārī-parvata (Udaigiri in Orissa) for the residence of Jaina monks. One may also deduce from this inscription that not only the Nandas were devotees of Jainism, but that at their

time Jainism was quite an established religion of a community in Kaliṅga. Some Jaina texts provide supportive evidence. For example, the *Vyavahāra-bhāṣya* says that a king named Tosalika steadfastly guarded the Jina image in the city of Tosalī. There are references to Mahāvīra's visit to Tosalī.[31] It may be noted that the *Subodhikā Tīkā*[32] on the *Kalpasūtra* informs us that the minister of the ninth Nanda was a certain Sagḍāla who was a Jaina, and who was the father of a famous Jaina *ācārya* Sthūlabhadra. Since ministership of the Nanda rulers was awarded on hereditary basis,[33] Sthūlabhadra's brother succeeded his father, while Sthūlabhadra himself joined the Jaina *saṅgha*. That the Jaina monks enjoyed the trust of the Nanda king can also be surmised from the fact that Chāṇakya is said to have exploited the services of a Jaina in the revolution which he successfully steered to remove the unpopular Nandas from power.

Both classical and Indian sources are in agreement on the point that it was, in fact, Chandragupta Maurya who overthrew the last of the Nandas and occupied his capital, Pāṭaliputra. The Indian sources add that he was actively supported by the able and sometimes unscrupulous Brāhmin advisor, called variously, Chāṇakya, Kauṭilya and Viṣṇugupta. Thus, the Nandas were succeeded by the mighty Mauryas, who very soon proved to be the first emperors of a large part of India. Jainism, like Buddhism began to flourish in their times. As mentioned above, there are some interesting Jaina traditions which reckon the first historical emperor of India Chandragupta's renowned chancellor Chāṇakya among the Jainas.[34] Chāṇakya is said to have been the son of a Jaina-layman Caṇi and an ardent champion of their faith. According to the Śvetāmbara texts, Chāṇakya did not like Chandragupta's kindness towards the heretics, i.e. other sects, and he devised a clever means to wean him away from them. The *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* informs us that he made Chandragupta invite the teachers of different sects into his

palace and make them wait near the king's harem.[35] But before the arrival of the teachers he got a layer of fine sand strewn near the harem. The lustful teachers could not resist the temptation of peeping through the windows of the harem to have a close look of Chandragupta's wives. But no sooner than the king appeared on the scene, they started talking to him about world renunciation. After the teachers left, Chāṇakya showed to the king their footprints all along the windows of the harem and thus convinced him about the sanctimonious hypocricy of those heretics. The Jaina monks were next to be invited. Fine sand was likewise strewn again. But when they came, they did not even glance at the harem and straightaway occupied the seats meant for them, awaiting the arrival of the king. It, therefore, took no time for Chandragupta to understand that the Jaina monks alone were protectors of the right morals and decided to bestow his favours, henceforth only on them.[36]

Chāṇakya seems to have served as the chancellor of Chandragupta's successor Bindusāra also for sometime. It is said, that Chāṇakya's name was blackened by his envious colleague Subandhu, so that he was relieved of his office. Saddened Chāṇakya gave away his wealth to the poor, and himself sat on a dung-hill outside the city to find there a wise man's death by fasting. In his effort to pacify Chāṇakya, Bindusāra dispatched Subandhu to go to him and to seek his forgiveness. While making his obeisance to the chancellor, Subandhu, however, threw secretly an incense coal into the dung-hill to put it afire. Chāṇakya was burnt alive to be reborn as a goddess. But he also did not let the enemy live in peace. Before leaving the world, he filled a basket with rich and rare perfumes, locked it with hundred locks and left it in his house. While looking for Chāṇakya's treasure, Subandhu stumbled on the basket. As he opened it, he found amongst the fragrant substances a note: 'One who smells these perfumes and does not lead the life of a monk,

would immediately invite death.' Subandhu renounced all the worldly pleasures out of his fear of death and wandered about restlessly in the world.[37] In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya the followers of heretical sects are referred to as *vṛṣala* or *pāsaṇḍa*. Particular sects are, however, mentioned by name only in one place, where a heavy fine is prescribed for inviting monks of heretical sects (*vṛṣalapravarjitān*), like the Śākyas the Ājīvikas and others for food. Curiously enough, Kauṭilya does not include the Jainas in this list. It is difficult to agree with the view that their position during that time was not so significant to be taken notice of.[38]

As already noticed, the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta is reported to have himself embraced Jainism towards the closing years of his life. The name of Chandragupta is absent in early Śvetāmbara canonical and non-canonical texts, and it is only in some *bhāṣya* and *Cūrṇi* texts, written after the Gupta period, that he figures by name. But the Digambara traditions, literary, as well as inscriptional, depict him as a Jaina. It is given to understand that he became a diligent Jaina, renounced finally his throne in accordance with the Digambara tradition, became an ascetic and went to Karnataka along with Jaina *muni* Bhadrabāhu and died a death by *saṁlehaṇā* or fast unto death in a cave in Śravaṇa Belgolā.[39] It is to this period that the great schism in Jainism is attributed by tradition. After the death of Mahāvīra, the order had been led by a series of leaders called *gaṇadharas,* or chief disciples. Bhadrabāhu, the eleventh *gaṇadhara* foresaw that a great famine of twelve years would soon occur in northern India, and therefore, a band of naked monks, under his leadership, departed for the Deccan, leaving behind many monks who refused to follow him under the leadership of another teacher Sthūlabhadra. It is claimed that Chandragupta himself joined Bhadrabāhu's march to the south as his disciple. The numbers of Jainas who left for the south and those who stayed were both 12,000. When he

reached Śravaṇa Belgolā in Karnataka, Bhadrabāhu felt his end approaching, and after designating Viśākha as his successor, he ended his life by fasting. The story is related in the *Bhadrabāhucarita* of Ratnanandin, a work of the fifteenth century AD but scholars like Jacobi take it to be preserving a fairly accurate tradition.[40]

There is, however, no unanimity among the scholars either regarding the earlier tradition of Chāṇakya being a Jaina Brāhmin or about the present one of Chandragupta's migration to the south with Bhadrabāhu as a Jaina monk. While Smith, Rice, Narasimhachar, Raychaudhuri, Jayaswal *et al* accept the tradition that Chandragupta had become a Jaina, scholars like Fleet and others doubt it. It has been argued that the earliest Digambara literary tradition regarding Chandragupta's conversion is that recorded by Hariṣeṇa in the *Bṛhatkathā* datable to 931 AD. It may be pointed out that a much earlier Digambara literary work, the *Tiloya–Paṇṇati*, written around 600 AD, represents Chandragupta as a Jaina devotee.[41] The *Rājāvalikathe* also avers that Chandragupta was a Jaina.[42] Although, this work is a compendium of the nineteenth century; it records early Jaina traditions, like the *Bhadrabāhucarita* of Ratnanadin. As mentioned above, a very old inscription at Śravaṇa Belgolā commemorates his visit to the south; a cave is dedicated to him, and the hill on which it exists is known as Chandragiri. Moreover, the reference to '*sarmanes*' by Megasthenes may be taken as a proof of the existence of Jaina monks in the time of Chandragupta. Scholars like H.C. Raychaudhuri and C.J. Shah observe that 'the epithet *vṛṣala* applied to him in the *Mudrārākṣasa* suggests that in regard to certain matters he did deviate from strict orthodoxy.'[42] It is difficult, therefore, to question the Jaina affiliations of Chandragupta. In view of the silence of Jaina tradition regarding his successor Bindusāra's affinity with Jainism, it is difficult to say anything about his attitude to the religion. However, some

scholars are inclined to hold that 'he must have extended his dominions so as to cover at least some portions of Mysore. . . . It may not be unlikely that, in addition to the Kṣatriya ambitions of mere conquest, Bindusāra might have been actuated by filial motive in acquiring Mysore, a place rendered sacred by the last days of his father Chandragupta.'[44]

As regards Aśoka, the son and successor of Bindusāra and the great Mauryan ruler, although there are views treating him to be a Jaina[45], but, as shown above, there can hardly be any doubt about his being an enthusiastic follower of Buddhism. But, in spite of his Buddhist faith, he is also known for his liberalism and broad-mindedness, a fact unreservedly, underlined in his edicts. At one place he says, 'whosoever praises his own sect or condemns other sects, all through attachment to one's own sect. . . if he is acting thus, he rather injures his own sect more assuredly'. Similarly, he says elsewhere, 'all sects must on all occasions be honoured'. In the thirteenth year after coronation Aśoka created a special class of officers called *dhamma mahāmāta* (*dhamma-mahāmātra*). One of the key functions of the new dignitaries was superintendence of charities and promotion of the interests of various religious groups ('Saṅgha, Brāhmaṇas, Nirgranthas, Ājīvikas and whatever other *pāsaṇḍas* there are').[47]

Very little authentic information is available about Aśoka's successors who held the throne of Pāṭaliputra up to 184 BC[48] Of his sons Tīvara, who alone is named in the edicts had, probably, predeceased him. Another son Jālauka seems to have become independent in Kashmir after Aśoka's death. The third son Kuṇāla or Suyaśas, according to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, ruled for eight years, but in the southern works he is passed over as a blind man.[49] The Jaina texts relate a tragic story about the loss of his eyes. Thus, our information about the sons of Aśoka is rather vague. According to the

Aśokāvadāna, Aśoka abdicated in favour of his grandson Samprati (Saṁpadi). The *Vāyu* and *Matsya Purāṇas*, however, inform us that he was preceded by another grandson of Aśoka, called Daśaratha. Although the Jaina and the Buddhist sources omit the name of Daśaratha, but his historicity is attested by his dedication of the caves to the Ājīvikas on the Nāgārjunī Hill.

Samprati enjoys the same esteem in Jaina legends as does Aśoka in the Buddhist ones. The legends furnish an interesting account of his conversion to the faith. After coming to power he is said to have come in contact with the famous Jaina saint Ārya Suhastin at Ujjain, and the latter told him that in his previous birth Samprati had been his disciple. Hearing that, Samprati became his devotee accepting the vows of a layman. He turned out to be a devout follower of Jainism. Hemachandra informs us that during Suhastin's stay at Ujjain, and under his guidance, splendid religious festivals and processions in honour of the Arhat were organised and great was the dedication manifested by the king and his subjects on this occasion. He is said to have done everything in his power to popularise the religion in various parts of India. He made twenty-five and a half countries suitable for the movement of Jaina monks and asked his vassals to prohibit the killing of living beings in their principalities.[50]

He used to send his spies in the garb of Jaina monks to the border regions. The example and advice of Samprati induced his feudatories to embrace and patronise his creed so that not only in his kingdom but also in adjacent countries the monks could practise their religion. He sent missionaries as far as Afganistan and the Andhra and Tamil countries, the first known contact of Śvetāmbaras with southern India. The *Pāṭaliputrakalpa* of Jinaprabhasūri says, 'in Pāṭaliputra flourished the great king Samprati, son of Kuṇāla, lord of Bhārata with its three continents (*trikhaṇḍaṁ Bhāratakṣetraṁ*

Jināyatana-maṇḍitam), the great *arahanta* who established *vihāras* for Śramaṇas in non-Āryan countries.' According to *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, he showed his zeal by causing Jaina temples to be erected over the whole of Jambudvīpa.[51] The later period considered him to be a founder of temples to such an extent that many buildings whose origin was forgotten were ascribed to his age, including the famous Śaiva temple of Mahākāla in Ujjain. We have a significant passage occurring in the *Niśīthaviśeṣacūrnī* of Jinadāsagaṇi, which compares the Mauryan dynasty with a barley-corn, emphasising that its middle portion, represented by the rule of Samprati, was elevated. Thus, the uniform Jaina tradition regarding Samprati's leaning towards Jainism may be taken to be based on fact.

In the second century BC, Samprati's younger brother Śāliśūka is also credited with the spread of Jainism in Saurāṣṭra.[52] Very little is known about the destiny of Jainism under the last Mauryan rulers and the dynasties which replaced them. The Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang found, around 629 AD, still numerous 'Nirgranthas' in Vaiśālī near Rājagṛha, Nālandā, Puṇḍravardhan.[53] From the time of Samprati, Jainism seems to have gradually shifted the centre of its activity from its homeland to other regions, such as, Mālwā, Mathurā and Central India. Khāravela, the king of Kaliṅga, appears to have been a devout follower and patron of Jainism. As mentioned above, he brought back from Magadha a celebrated image of the Jaina *Tīrthaṅkara*, carried away earlier by Nandarāja.[54] He professed the religion and promoted its cause by setting up Jaina images himself. Inscriptions have been found in Udaigiri near Cuttack, which say that he had got a statue of Agra-jina (probably the first *Tīrthaṅkar*a Ṛṣabha) erected, and also had many caves excavated in the Kumārī-parvata (Udaigiri in Orissa) for the residence of Jaina monks.

Thus, while in the lifetime of Mahāvīra his followers lived

mainly in the ancient kingdoms of Videha, Magadha and Aṅga in east India and westward as far as a Kāśī (Varanasi) and Kośala, they strove strenuously for the diffusion of their faith and achieved considerable success. The *Therāvalī*, which is a part of the *Kalpasūtra*, gives us some idea of the spread of Jainism in different parts of India. Although, *Bṛhatakalpa*, a *Chedasūtra* text, mentions the limits of its expansion by restraining the Jaina not to go beyond Aṅga-Magadha in the east, Kauśāmbī in the south, Kuṇāla (North Kośala) in the north, Thūṇā (Thāneśwar) in the west, there is reason to believe that Jainism had carved out strong pockets of its influence in far-flung areas. Before the rise of the Mauryas, the religion had, probably, spread to north Bengal (Puṇḍravardhana) and a substantial Jaina community had been established there. In the *Kalpasūtra*, we find the mention of three significant names out of the four *śākhās* originating from Godāsa a disciple of Bhadrabāhu, the renowned saint of the Mauryan period.[55] The three significant names are Tāmraliptikā *śākhā*, Koṭivarṣiyā *śākhā* and Puṇḍravardhanīyā *śākhā*. These were, evidently, named after three well-known geographical units situated in Bengal. Mahāvīra himself is said, in the ancient Jaina text *Ācarāṅga*, to have visited some places in Bengal during his missionary career, so it is likely that Jainism may have got a foothold at places where he had taught. By visiting areas both in western and southern Bengal Mahāvīra is likely to have visited places which were not far from the borders of Orissa. *Āvaśyaka-niryukti*, a rather late Jaina text, indeed, records that Mahāvīra more than once visited Tosalī, a well-known town of Orissa. It has been suggested that Jainism was, probably, introduced in Orissa by some zealous monks of Bengal during the closing years of the fifth century BC. In the ancient kingdom of Kaliṅga the religion is richly represented in icons and relics.

According to the Jaina canonical works, both Pārśva and

Mahāvīra had visited Mathurā in course of their religious wanderings. The *Nāyādhammakahāo* records the visit of Pārśva to Mathurā,[56] while the *Vipāka-sūtra* records that of Mahāvīra.[57] It is difficult to visualise, however, the intensity of impact that their visits may have made on an area already established as a centre of Hindu culture. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the Jaina influence spread quite early in the areas of Mathurā, Daśapura and Ujjayinī in Mālwā. According to *Paumacariyaṁ* of Vimalsūri, a text datable to first century AD, Śvetāmbara Jaina religion was introduced in Mathurā by the seven Jaina saints named Suramantra, Śrīmantra, Śrītilaka, Sarvasundara, Jayamantra, Anilalalita and Jayamitra.[58] Since the earliest Jaina inscription from Mathurā is as old as 150 BC, it can easily be conjectured that Jainism got a foothold there at least by the beginning of the second century BC.[59] Jainas are also said to have been spotted on the banks of the Sindhu at the time of Alexander's invasion.[60] According to Arian, Alexander had very much desired one of the Indian ascetics to join him since he so much admired their endurance.[61] Endurance being the striking feature of these ascetics, they are quite likely to have been Jainas. The Jaina literary works suggest the existence of Jaina temples in all principal towns of north India. Although almost all those early monuments are untraceable now, but archaeological and epigraphic remains give us some idea about the state of its popularity in places like Kauśāmbī, Śrāvastī, Rājagriha, Ahicchatra, Takṣaśilā, Siṁhapura and a few places in western India.[62]

As noted above the renowned Jaina saint and scholar Bhadrabāhu is credited with the spread of Jainism in south India. According to the strongly held Jaina tradition, the great following of Bhadrabāhu which migrated to Śravaṇa Belgolā included the first Mauryan emperor Chandragupta, who not only patronised Jainism, but himself became a monk after abdication. Another Mauryan ruler Samprati, the

grandson of Aśoka is also said to have given great impetus to the spread of Jainism by facilitating Jaina travel in south India beyond the Deccan. Celebrated Tamil classics like *Maṇimekhalai* and *Śilappaddikāram* attest to the high degree of Jaina influence in south India. In about the late second century BC King Khāravela of Kaliṅga became instrumental in establishing Jainism in Orissa. We gather from the Jaina work *Kālakāchārya kathānaka* that in about the first century BC a renowned teacher Kālakāchārya is reported to have invited the Scythian tribe called the Śakas to Western India and Ujjain perhaps from Śakasthāna in Sindh to overthrow the local king Gandabhilla or Gardabhilla who had abducted a Jaina nun who happened to be Kālakāchārya's sister. It is stated that with the help of the Scythian kings Kālaka defeated King Gardabhilla of Ujjain and established their rule there. After a few years, the son of Gardabhilla, and the celebrated hero of Indian tradition, Vikramāditya came up from Pratishṭhāna with an army, expelled the Śakas from Ujjain, and ruled there for many years and founded the famous Vikrama era (58-57 BC). Carpentier subscribes to the historical foundation of the story for the reason that *Kālakāchāryakathā* refers to the Sythian Kings as *Sāhānusāhiḥ* which is identical with the title *'Shaonano Shao'* occurring on a number of coins of the Kuṣāṇas.[63] Vikramāditya himself, according to the Jaina sources, was a patron of Jainism.[64] Kālakāchārya is also said to have travelled to Suvarṇadvīpa in South-East Asia and is credited with having written the *Mūlaprathamānuyoga* texts, now lost, which were re-edited by Āryarakṣita in c. second century AD.

As regards the history of the Jaina monastic movement, nothing very authentic is known about its development for about 150 years after the death of its founder. According to the Jaina literary accounts, Mahāvīra had won over 14,000 monks, 36,000 nuns, laymen and laywomen. Each one of these four groups or four *'tīrthas'* was under the supervision

of trustworthy heads. Goyama (Gautama) Indrabhūti and Chandanā were the heads of the Jaina community of monks and nuns, respectively. Jaina laymen were under Śankhaśataka and laywomen under Sulasā and Revatī. During his lifetime, Mahāvīra was the head of the entire Jaina community. After his death, according to some sources, Gautama Indrabhūti became the spiritual leader for twelve years, though other sources say that having become a *kevalīn* he never held office.[65] It seems from the Jaina records that Mahāvīra had built an excellent cadre of his chief disciples (*gaṇadharas*, i.e. supporters or leaders of groups, *gaṇas* of people), numbering eleven in all, each of whom had several junior disciples under him. It is interesting to note that his chief disciples (*gaṇadharas*) were all Brāhmins.[66] They were well-versed in the twelve *Aṅgas* and the fourteen *Pūrvas*, i.e. the Jaina canon. Unfortunately, nine out of the eleven *gaṇadharas* died in the very lifetime of Mahāvīra. The two to survive were Gautama Indrabhūti and Ārya Sudharmā (Suhamma). Indrabhūti became omniscient in the night Mahāvīra died and, therefore, did not preside over the community as a teacher. Thus, only Sudharmā remained who could supervise the order. He held this position for twelve years, i.e. till the death of Gautama Indrabhūti. Then he himself became *kevalī* and handed the order over to his disciple Jambūsvāmī; he then lived for eight years before being released. Jambūsvāmī led the order till one year after the death of his predecessor and then he also became omniscient and finally, 64 years after Mahāvīra, attained Nirvāṇa. With him the last omniscient left the world. Nobody hereafter could achieve perfection. The aforesaid three *kevalīs* were followed in succession by five *śrutakevalīs,* i.e. knower of all holy scriptures. The management of the order then went over to seven or eleven teachers who succeeded one another. They knew only a part of the canonic works. The order was thereafter managed by those whose knowledge was still less.

The succession of Indrabhūti, Sudharmā and Jambūsvāmī in that order after Mahāvīra has been commonly accepted in the Śvetāmbara and Digambara traditions indicating that there was no major dissension till then in the Jaina *saṅgha.* But thereafter the list of five *śrutakevalīns* varies in both the traditions. According to the Śvetāmbaras, they are: Prabhava, Śayyambhava, Yaśobhadra, Sambhūtavijaya and Bhadrabāhu, whereas the list of the Digambaras contains Vishṇu, Nandi, Aparājita, Govardhana and Bhadrabāhu. The fact, that Bhadrabāhu figures as the last *śrutakevalīn* in both the traditions, may indicate that till the time of Bhadrabāhu, the Jaina *saṅgha* was largely intact and undivided. It does not mean that the Jaina order remained totally free of dissensions before the time of Bhadrabāhu. As many as eight principal schisms are said to have occurred up to the origin of the major Digambara-Śvetāmbara division.[67] Out of these the first two occurred in Mahāvīra's own lifetime. Like the Buddhist *saṅgha,* after the death of Mahāvīra, the Jaina saṅgha also got divided on several occasions. Originally the seven schisms (*nihnava*-denial or disowning or heresy) are mentioned in the Jaina texts, the eighth *nihnava* the Boḍiya being added later.

Significant developments, thus, seem to be taking place in Jainism when it blossomed under the Mauryan empire. During this period the sphere of Jaina movement started spreading towards the western and central and further to the Deccan and southern part of India, rather than remaining confined to its original home where rival creeds of the Buddha and the Ājīvikas seem to have prevailed. As noted above, Chandragupta, owing to his interest in Jainism, not only made the religion firm in north India, but also had a hand in spreading it to the southern parts of his empire as he was one of the pioneers to go there along with Bhadrabāhu and others. Looking to the broad-based liberalism of Aśoka, so evident in his edicts, it is probable

that the Jainas were able to maintain their place in the society if not at the royal court. With the stepping in of Samprati, another Mauryan ruler, Jainism took an aggressive role and spread to central India, the Deccan and as far as Kuḍukka (Coorg) in south India, the beginnings of which were already made by his great-grandfather Chandragupta.

The expansion of Jainism in south India had a significant bearing on its internal evolution.[68] According to the Digambara tradition, the Mauryan empire, during Chandragupta's rule, suffered a severe famine. Bhadrabāhu, the head of the Jaina *saṅgha* realised that it was not possible either for people to feed a great number of monks under these circumstances, or for ascetics to follow all the precepts. He, therefore, thought it prudent to emigrate with a large band of naked monks from the Gaṅgā valley to the Deccan, where they established important centres of their faith, the most important being at Śravaṇa Belgolā in Karnataka. Chandragupta Maurya is also said to have accompanied Bhadrabāhu as a monk. A number of monks stayed back in Magadha under the leadership of Bhadrabāhu's disciple Sthūlabhadra. The distress and confusion of the famine seems to have burdened so heavily on the latter that they adopted many dubious practices, the most censurable of which was the wearing of the white robes. Not only they had ceased to observe strictly several holy functions but had also failed to maintain faithfully the holy scriptures. Bhadrabāhu and his followers insisted upon the rule of nudity, whereas Sthūlabhadra allowed his followers to wear white garments. Thus, the serious dispute in the ascetic conduct of life between those who had emigrated and those who had stayed back resulted in the emergence of the two major sects of the Jainas, viz. the Digambaras ('space-clad', i.e. naked) and the Śvetāmbaras (white-clad).

The Śvetāmbara tradition places this schism quite later in AD 82 or 609 years after the death of Mahāvīra which took

place, according to this tradition, in 527 BC. It relates the story of a certain teacher called Śivabhūti, also known as Saharsamalla. He is said to have founded the sect called 'Boḍiya' or Botika in the town of Rathavīrapura.[69] The story goes that Śivabhūti had been converted by the monk Āryarakṣita. Śivabhūti had earlier rendered valuable services to the king who showered honours on him. One day he received a costly garment from the king which his *guru* Āryarakṣita tore to pieces. Understanding the meaning of his Master's action Śivabhūti resolved to wear no clothes thereafter and began to preach nudity. His sister Uttarā also tried to follow him. But the courtesans complained that nobody would go to them seeing the ugly nature of the feminine body. Śivabhūti dissuaded his sister from nudity saying that women can never get salvation. Thus was founded, according to the Śvetāmbara tradition, which dates from the twelfth century AD, the Boḍika, Botika or Nagnatā sect which developed eventually into the order of the Digambaras. Śivabhūti is credited there for two fundamental dogmas of the Digambaras, viz., nudity and the ineligibility of women for the attainment of Nirvāṇa.

Thus, the traditional accounts regarding the Digambar-Śvetāmbara split not merely differ with these two sects but at times they seem to be puerile and an outcome of sectarian hatred. They, however, agree in assigning it to the end of the first century AD. But it is difficult to fix a tentative date for the split which was the result of an evolution going on for a long time. It is uncertain, whether the root of the great schism, existing even now in the Jaina order, traces back really to the background connected with the twelve year long famine or not. It is quite probable that there had been since long two trends in Jainism, a stricter one, which referred Mahāvīra's rule to move about naked and a milder one, which obeyed Pārśvanātha's more liberal precept to wear an under garment. The dissension between the two groups becoming

more and more intense in the course of time was undoubtedly favoured by the fact that Jainism had expanded its influence over wide regions of India and it was always possible for the individual communities, separated geographically from one another, to develop unique features. In the process of this development a situation must have been reached when the conflict would have become irreconcilable paving the way for an inevitable schism.

Both the Digambara and Śvetāmbara traditions hold that an oral canon had been passed down from the days of Mahāvīra and Bhadrabāhu, the last *śrutakevalin* to know it perfectly, had migrated to the Deccan. An urgent need to retrieve the canon was, therefore, felt necessary. In order to acquire the canon anew Bhadrabāhu's pupil Sthūlabhadra, who is said to have studied 10 *Pūrvas* at his feet, convened a council at Pāṭaliputra. The famine having been over by that time, Bhadrabāhu is said to have returned with many of the exiles. Not only he did not attend the council but disgusted as he was to see the corrupt practices in the *saṅgha* of Magadha, he departed for Nepal to end his days in solitary fasting and penance. The council of Pāṭaliputra attempted to reconstruct the canon as much as possible, but could not succeed in putting together the whole canon owing to the defective memory of Sthūlabhadra and other leading monks. The reconstructed canon comprised twelve *Aṅgas* or sections, which are said to have replaced the fourteen 'former texts' (*Pūrvas*). The books were not committed to writing at the time but were orally transmitted. The followers of Bhadrabāhu repudiated the work of the council and refused to recognise the new canon. This canon was, thus, accepted by the Śvetāmbaras only since the Digambaras presumed that the canon has been gradually lost completely. The texts of the Śvetāmbara canon were finally settled and given its present form in the council of Valabhi in Gujarat held under the presidentship of Devarddhi Gaṇi in the fifth century AD.

Almost all Jaina authors from Hemachandra onwards place the demise of Bhadrabāhu at the age of seventy-six in the year 170 after the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra. He is given the credit of compiling the *Kalpasūtra* (the lives of Jinas), beside the commentaries (*Niryuktis*) on ten canonical books, and another work *Upasarga Harastotra* in praise of Pārśvanātha which the Śvetāmbaras hold to be their holiest book. A work on astronomy called *Bhadrabāhu Saṁhitā* is also attributed to him.[70] But it apparently seems to belong to a later period than that of famous astronomer Varāhamihira. Bhadrabāhu is said to have preached in different parts of India and four of his disciples, viz. Agnidatta, Jinadatta, Somadatta and Godāsa attained considerable fame. None of them, however, succeeded as the head of the Jaina order after Bhadrabāhu. As mentioned above, the name of Sambhūtavijaya figures in the list of *śrutakevalins* of the Śvetāmbara tradition only, which informs us further that it was his disciple Sthūlabhadra who had summoned the council of Pāṭaliputra. It was this council which had resulted finally in the split of the Jaina order into the Digambara and the Śvetāmbara sects.

Sthūlabhadra died sometime in the middle of the third century BC. His two eminent disciples were Ārya Mahāgiri and Ārya Suhastin, but discords cropped up between the two and they founded their town *gaṇas*. After the death of Sthūlabhadra, Mahāgiri became the head of the community. He is said to have revived the practice of nudity which had become loose in the recent past. He felt that under his predecessor the Jaina order had been losing its path and, therefore, endeavoured to restore the old practices, such as, strict observance of nudity. The negative consequence of Mahāgiri's efforts was that many a monks drifted away from him under the influence of rival teachers who subscribed to liberal norms. There was already a prophecy in the Jaina tradition that after Sthūlabhadra the monks would turn to a less strenuous way-faring. Another significant development

of the times further jeopardised Mahāgiri's reforming activities. In the meantime Suhastin, the other disciple of Sthūlabhadra, had converted Samprati, the Mauryan ruler of Avanti and grandson of Aśoka, to Jainism. We have noted above that Samprati turned out to be a great patron of Jainism. He showered rich food and clothes on the members of the *saṅgha*. Suhastin and his disciples used to accept the royal alms. Mahāgiri warned Suhastin not to do so but the latter could not refuse them for fear of annoying the king. Finding it worthless to remonstrate with Suhastin, Mahāgiri discontinued his spiritual association with him. Failing to win over the monks to a stricter discipline of monastic life and finding that the king Samprati had been fully won over by Ārya Suhastin, Ārya Mahāgiri left the region and went to Saśārṇabhadra (Daśārṇapura) in order to practice penance and starve to death.[71] It seems that the monks patronised by king Samprati were probably the followers of the Śvetāmbara sect as may be inferred from the *Bṛhatkalpabhāṣya*, a work belonging to a later period than that of Samprati. This, probability, is strengthened by the fact that the Digambara *paṭṭāvalis* omit the name of Ārya Suhastin.

Of the eight disciples of Mahāgiri, the two famous ones, Uttarā and Balissaha, founded a school known by their joint names. Another disciple Rohagupta also acquired considerable fame.

After the death of Mahāgiri, Suhastin became the leader of the *saṅgha*. Backed by royal patronage and protection, he set himself to repair the weakness, which he thought, had befallen the *saṅgha* due to the reforming mission of Mahāgiri. He readily got new disciples. Suhastin was followed by Susthitasūri as the head of the Jaina order, sometime in the first quarter of the second century BC. During his stewardship, the name of the Jainas is said to have been changed from Nirgrantha-gaccha to Kālika-gaccha or Kalika-gaccha in honour of his teacher Kalikāchārya or

Kālakāchārya.[72] Indradinna succeeded Susthitasūri in the high office of the order. Kālikachārya continued to live in the time of Indradinna. We have already referred to the Jaina accounts of Kalikāchārya's exploits against Gardabhilla the king of Ujjayinī, which the former carried out with the help of the Śakas. This legend is, probably, not devoid of historical content, for it records how the Jaina saint Kālaka, having been humiliated by king Gardabhilla, who, according to various traditions, was the father of the famous Vikramāditya, went in his desire for revenge to the land of the Śakas, whose king was styled 'king of kings' (*sāhānusāhi*). The event can safely be placed in the first part of the first century BC. The story is also valued for its moral message that whoever strives for the protection of the faith obtains glory, even at the cost of action otherwise not easy to justify. It is, however, pertinent to observe that most of what is narrated about the *kevalins*, their successors or even the schisms, as noted above, is based mostly on accounts blended with legends wherein it sometimes becomes difficult to sift facts from fables.

From the historical background of the Jaina movement, as outlined above, it is evident that Jainism, like Buddhism, began to flourish in the days of the Mauryas. Although the Jainas were proud of the rigorous and austere life-styles of their monks, but in the post Nirvāṇa era of Mahāvīra relaxations and exceptions creeped into the code of conduct of Jaina monks. Not only the junior monks, i.e. *kṣullakas* began to keep three, two or one cloth alongwith a bowl but the senior monks, having accepted nudity also started keeping one woolen blanket to save themselves from the extreme cold of northern region and also a bowl for accepting alms, particularly some liquids, necessary in old age. Thus, the code of *jinakalpa* and *sthavirakalpa* alongwith *sāmāyika-cāritra* (junior monk-hood) and (*chedopasthāpanīyacāritra*) (senior monk-hood) came into

existence, which, later on, divided Jainism into sects, such as, Digambara, Śvetāmbara and Yāpanīya with their respective codes of conduct. Evidently, Jainism passed through many upheavals in the course of its early history but there was no development which can be compared to the evolution of Mahāyāna from Theravāda Buddhism.

In spite of the great schism in Jainism and the fact that its division into two major sects has persisted down to the present times, there were never any basic doctrinal differences between the two. In fact, all Jainas, whatever their sect, maintain the same fundamental teachings, which seem to have been little altered since the time of Bhadrabāhu. The scrupulous care for the preservation of original customs, institutions and doctrines were responsible for the inflexible conservatism of their tradition and thought. On the question of attaining highest spiritual state, for example, the Śvetāmbara Jaina canon refers to both kinds of monks, those who put on clothes and those who go about naked.[73] Besides, there are a large number of Prakrit verses, which are common in the Śvetāmbara and Digambara works of antiquity.[74] Though the teachers of one school would in the past often speak bitterly about the practices of the other, the most glaring of the differences ceased to be pungent in later times, so much so, that the naked Digambara monks took to wearing robes in public. Both the orientations seem to have been constantly aware of their common origin and goal and have never lost spiritual contact with each other. On the contrary, there are some important differences in the social organisation of the two schools, such as the Digambara belief that women can never attain final deliverance by any means. Similarly, their cult idols depict the *Tīrthaṅkaras* nude without a loincloth or ornaments, whereas the Śvetāmbara idols are invariably depicted with loincloth and ornaments. Further, the different approaches of the two schools regarding the canon, as mentioned above,

has had a far-reaching significance for the development of Jaina tradition and thought.

Thus, the personality of Mahāvīra, support of certain powerful rulers, closeness to the spirit of its age, simplicity, and acceptance of the language of people for its propagation contributed to its rise and spread in different regions. The organic bond between the laymanship and the *saṅgha* proved to be extremely useful for the propagation of Jainism. The close connection between the spiritual and the layman, which has constantly been maintained in Jainism seems to be key factor of its viability in India down to our times.[75] Unlike Buddhism, it never rose, though, to overbearing heights, yet at no point of time it suffered the fate of its rival by disappearing from the land of its birth. It has, not only, led a quiet existence through the centuries, but continues to thrive as a popular religion with substantial following in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Karnataka, etc. While the Śvetāmbaras are far more numerous in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh etc., the Digambaras are confined chiefly in the Deccan, especially in Karnataka. But their number is quite negligible and they generally stay in secluded places.

In the early Jaina texts, the main opponents of Mahāvīra are the Ājīvikas, led by their teacher Makkhali Gośāla (Maṅkhaliputta Gośāla or Maskarīputra Gośāla). Among the heads of the ascetic sects of the sixth and fifth centuries BC Makkhaliputta Gośāla appears to have been the most significant beside Mahāvīra and Buddha. Our sources reveal that, beside those of the Buddhists and Jainas, the order of the Ājīvikas was important in Bihar and eastern U.P. The history of the Ājīvikas commenced, as the Buddhist records indicate, with Nanda Vaccha, who was succeeded as leader of the sect by Kisa Saṁkicca.[76] The third leader of the sect and the greatest exponent of their religio-philosophy was Makkhali Gośāla, who is often mentioned as the second in

the Buddhist list of six heretical teachers.[77] According to both Buddhist and Jaina traditions, he was of a humble birth, being the son of a professional beggar. After several experiences, he had joined the Nirgrantha order, but then left it, after being its member for six years and founded his own order of the Ājīvikas. He is said to have met Mahāvīra after sixteen years in the city of Śrāvastī, leading to a fierce altercation between the two. It appears that Gośāla died soon afterwards, probably a year or so before the Buddha about 487 BC. His death is said to have coincided with the war of Kuṇiya-Ajātasatru with Cheṭaka the king of Vaiśālī. Some important details are preserved in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* of the suffering and intense pain accompanying Gośāla's fatal illness. His followers remained truthful to his teachings even after his death. Hoernle has given a detailed account of the life of Gośāla based on the *Viyāhapaṇṇatti*.[78] But this account of Gośāla's life seems to be one-sided, based as it is on the Jaina point of view. The Ājīvikas continued to be rivals of Buddhism and Jainism even after two centuries of Gautama and Mahāvīra. Their hostile confrontation with the Jainas at Śrāvastī, a little before their preceptor's death, has been noted above. That they did not enjoy cordial relationship with the Buddhists is revealed by such terms used for the Ājīvikas in the Buddhist literature as *michchhājīvo, Ājīvikam michchhā apam, Ājīvikanaña' eva anuchchharika,* etc.[79]

Ājīvika doctrines bear a generic likeness to those of Gośāla's contemporary and former friend Mahāvīra. Quite like Mahāvīra, for example, he also looked back to earlier teachers and ascetic groups, whose doctrines he appears to have refurbished and developed.[80] On the question of Gośāla's influence on Mahāvīra, H. Jacobi has observed: 'The greatest influence on the development of Mahāvīra's doctrines, I believe, must be ascribed to Gośāla, the son of Makkhali. . . . The fact that these two teachers lived together for a long period, presupposes, it would appear, some

similarity between their opinions. . . . the expression *sabbe satthā sabbe pāṇā sabbe blūta sabbe jīva* is common to both Gośāla and the Jainas and from the commentary we learn that the division of animals into *ekendriyas, dvindriyas,* etc. which is so common in Jaina texts, was also used by Gośāla. The curious and almost paradoxical Jaina doctrine of the six *leśyās* closely resembles, as Professor Leumann was the first to perceive, Gośāla's division of mankind into six classes; but in this particular case I am inclined to believe that the Jainas borrowed the idea from the Ājīvikas and altered it so as to harmonise with the rest of their own doctrines. With regard to the rules of conduct the collective evidence obtainable is such as to amount nearly to prove that Mahāvīra borrowed the more rigid rules from Gośāla.'[81]

The Ājīvikas have not left behind any literature of their own. Whatever little we know about them is gathered from the Buddhist, Jaina and Brāhmaṇical sources, but even this information is so much coloured by sectarian bias and so very contradictory in places that it becomes difficult, sometimes, to bring them all into a focus.[82] However, their general trustworthiness is assured in so far as they emanate from hostile and independent sources.[83] Both the Jaina and Buddhist records agree in calling the Ājīvikas naked ascetics (*acelakas*),[84] in differentiating their rules of life from those of the hermits of the *Vānaprastha* order, in magnifying their uncleanliness, in emphasising their corruption of morals, in imputing secular motive to their religious life, and in mercilessly criticising their fatalistic creed. The fundamental doctrine of the Ājīvikas, apart from being pronouncedly atheistic, comprised its thorough-going kind of determinism, denying the free will of man and his moral responsibility for any so-called good and evil. The prevalent doctrine of *karman,* as taught in the *Upaniṣads,* Buddhism and Jainism, laid down that though a man's present condition was determined by his past actions, he could influence his

destiny, in this life and the future, by choosing the right course of conduct. The Ājīvikas did not accept this position. According to them, the whole universe was conditioned and determined to the minutest detail by an impersonal cosmic principle, *Niyati*, or destiny and it was, therefore, not possible to influence the course of transmigration in any way. For Gośāla, belief in free will was a vulgar error. 'The strong, the forceful, and the courageous, like the weakling, the idler, and the coward, were all completely subject to the one principle which determined all things.'[85] 'Just as a ball of thread when thrown will unwind to its full length, so fool and wise alike will take their course, and make an end of sorrow'.[86] Thus, Ājīvikas were the most prominent heretics and *akriyā-vādins*, who upheld the doctrine of *saṁsāra* but rejected altogether the possibility of individual initiative in gaining final liberation. Though nothing could be done to influence the course of future events the Ājīvikas practised severe asceticism holding the view that they were ordained by the destiny to do so. The *Ṭhānāṅga* mentions four kinds of austerities practised by them: severe austerities, rigorous austerities, abstention from ghee and other delicacies, and indifference to pleasant and unpleasant food.[87] The severity of their asceticism often terminated, like that of the Jainas, in death by starvation.

Like other ascetic orders, Ājīvikas also had lay followers in the society, and the *Pācittiya* of the Buddhist *Vinaya Piṭaka* contains a reference of a person of the royal family of Bimbisāra having been initiated as a follower of the Ājīvika sect.[88] That the Ājīvika order consisted of recluses and householders, both male and female, is attested by the Buddhist version of Makkhali's doctrine of *chalābhijātio* – division of mankind into six *abhijātis* or mental types. The Jaina texts *Uvāsagadasāo* and *Bhagavatī Sūtra* make mention of a few rich lay disciples of Gośāla belonging to the Vaiśya class, e.g. Kuṇḍakuliya a banker of Kampillapura,

Saddālaputta a rich potter of Polasapura, Hālāhalā, in whose potter shop in Sāvatthi Gośāla stayed for a greater part of his ascetic life. Similarly, the *Majjhima Nikāya* mentions Panduputta a carriage-builder as belonging to the Ājīvika order.[89] According to the commentary of the *Dhammapada*, Migāra, a banker of Sāvatthi, was a lay follower of the Ājīvikas.[90]

Our sources reveal that Ājīvika strongholds lay in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Śrāvastī, which had become his headquarter during his later days shows that his religion was popular in Kośala also. Ājīvikism had a strong footing in Magadha is supported by the fact that it was probably the first doctrine preached in the Magadhan dialect.[91] As noted above, it is gathered from the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* that in his career Gośāla had lived with Mahāvīra in Nālandā. Upaka an Ājīvika of Magadha had met Buddha on the road to Gāyā. Similarly, it was an Ājīvika who had informed Mahākassapa of the death of Buddha. All these, together with more concrete Aśokan records, clearly show that the eastern region of the country was the area where flourished the Ājīvika movement before the beginning of the Christian era. It seems that Rājagriha, Udaṇḍapura, Champā, Vaiśālī, Kāśī and Śrāvastī were the principal and successive centres of the Ājīvika order in its early days. According to the *Uvāsagadasāo*, an Ājīvika hall is said to have been built in Śrāvastī. Thus, Ājīvikism, which was at first a local movement of Rājagriha, spread within a century or so over a wider area of which Champā was the most easterly point and Śrāvastī the western limit. Some scholars are, however, inclined to the view that the Ājīvika influence was not confined to Kośala, but ranged over a wider area extending as far west as Avanti, and as far east as the frontier district of Bengal (Vaṅgantajanapada).[92]

Following a period of considerable strength and prosperity, partly due to Mauryan patronage to an extent, the Ājīvika

movement appears to have gradually weakened. It is heard of again as an important sect in the sixth century AD. Varāhamihira mentions it as one of the seven sects of his time. In the *Niśītha Cūrṇī*, the *Paṇḍarbhikkhus* are identified with the disciples of Gośāla. That their influence had declined a great deal is also indicated by the fact that the later writers were unable to represent them correctly. For instance, Śīlāṅka (876 AD) identifies Ājīvikas with Digambaras,[93] Maṇibhadra, commentator of the *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya*, with Buddhists,[94] and Bhaṭṭoppala, commentator of the *Bahajjātaka*, with *Ekadaṇḍins*. It may be noted that Pāṇini in one of his *sūtras* describes the Maskarinas (Ājīvikas) as a class of wanderers who carried a *maskara* or bamboo staff about them.[95] That is how they got the other name *Ekadaṇḍins*. On the contrary Patañjali, while commenting on the above *sūtra* of Pāṇini, says that the Maskariṇas were so called because they taught '*mā krita karmāṇi, mā krita karmāṇi,* etc. i.e. don't perform actions, don't perform actions; Quitism (alone) is desirable to you'.[96] The explanation offered by Patañjali accords well with the *akriyāvāda* doctrine of the Ājīvikas.

There is reason to believe that during the early centuries of its existence the Ājīvika movement was sufficiently vibrant and influential, so much so, that Jainism and Buddhism both considered it as their main rival. It is, therefore, in no small measure that the Ājīvikas are derided and ridiculed on various counts in the Jaina and Buddhist texts.[97] It is probable that the corruption of their morals which Jainas and Buddhists stigmatise may not be utterly unfounded, and some stray examples of moral lapse may have been generalised by their rivals and applied to the whole sect. Otherwise, it would be difficult to comprehend that, if the Ājīvikas were, as a body, so viciously immoral and encroached on the decency of the civilised sections of the society, how

could they retain, as they did, such an important position amidst the rival sects?

Scholars are of the view that the Ājīvikas were quite numerous in the time of the Nandas and that Mahāpadma himself was, perhaps, a patron of Ājīvikism.[98] It is stated in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* that sometime after Gośāla's death at Śrāvastī, the Ājīvika headquarter was shifted to Puṇḍa, a country at the foot of the Vindhya mountains, of which the capital was a city provided with a hundred gates (*sayaduāra*). Its king Mahāpauma, also known as Devasena and Vimalavāhana, is said to have persecuted the Jainas at the behest of the Ājīvikas whose patron he was. It is added further that the wicked king was destroyed by the magical powers of a Jaina saint named Sumaṅgala, the disciple of Arhat Vimal. Mahāpauma of the *Bhagavatī* account is taken to be Mahāpadma Nanda. Similarly, the city of *Sayaduāra* with its hundred gates may be Pāṭaliputra. Puṇḍa (Puṇḍra) or Northern Bengal was not far distant from Magadha and was probably included in the Nanda dominion. As noted above, the power and pelf of the Nanda is attested by a variety of sources and in this respect also he resembles the Mahāpauma of the above account. The Purāṇic accounts unreservedly show that Nanda was not a follower of orthodox Hinduism.

The identification of Mahāpauma with Mahāpadma is rendered doubtful in the light of the Jaina tradition which is generally favourable to the Nandas. We have noted above the Jaina leanings of the Nandas. The *Pariśiṣṭaparvan* praises the Nanda king and recounts several favourable legends about him, none of which give any inkling of his anti-Jaina stance. Further, there is a theory that Mahāpadma was himself a follower of Jainism. The theory is based on the favourable tone of the Jaina legends about him and the mutilated Hāthīguṁphā inscription, which, according to one reading, records that Khāravela retrieved a statue of Jina which had been taken away by the Nanda. The latter ground

is rather fragile in so far as it is a double-edged argument. If Mahāpadma were to be taken as a believer of Jainism it would be highly improbable on his part to outrage the faith of his co-religionists by forcibly taking away the Jina image from their temple. Conversely, it is also possible that he may have taken away the image as a memento, acquired by harrying a sect towards which he was hostile. Moreover, the Nanda, figuring in the Hāthīguṁphā inscription, may not have been Mahāpadma at all, but some other Nanda king.[99] In the light of the above, if it is to be presumed that Mahāpadma was favourably disposed towards Ājīvikism, then it is quite possible to deduce that Mahāpauma of the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* was none other than Mahāpadma Nanda. A late tradition preserved in the *Vaṁsattha-ppakāsinī*,[100] the commentary on the *Mahāvaṁsa*, lends some credibility to the above hypothesis. It says that Chāṇakya after incurring the displeasure of the last Nanda, escaped his wrath disguising as a nude Ājīvika ascetic. This could only have been possible if we imagine that Ājīvikas were widespread in that period and that they were not subject to persecution in the royal household.

It seems that Ājīvikism had spread quite rapidly beyond its cradle. In the *Mahāvaṁsa* there is an interesting reference to a group of Ājīvikas which existed in Sri Lanka in the time of king Pandukabhya. He, the grandfather of Aśoka's contemporary, is said to have built a 'house of Ājīvikas' (*Ājīvikānaṁ gehaṁ*) at Anurādhāpura.[101] A.L. Basham has drawn attention to a passage in the *Petavatthu* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* which informs us that king Pingala of Suraṭṭha, who, two hundred years after Buddha's Nirvāṇa, left his kingdom in the service of the Mauryas (*Moriyānaṁ upaṭṭhānaṁ*). On his way back to his capital, he was accosted by a *peta*, who told him that he was the disembodied soul of one who had formerly been a heretic of Suraṭṭha, who held Ājīvika views. It may be inferred from the passage that Ājīvikism may have spread to Gujarat by this period.[102]

We have more reliable evidence to glean its position and vitality in the Mauryan period. The Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* prohibits, by penal legislation, entertainment of the Śākyas, Ājīvikas and other heretical monks at rites in honour of gods and manes.[103] It is significant that along with the Śākyas, that is, Buddhists, the Ājīvikas alone are mentioned and other heretical sects, especially the Jainas, are left to be inferred only from the use of the term *ādi*. This shows that Ājīvikas were then a prominent sect. It is pertinent to note that ascetics in general were avoided by orthodox Indians on auspicious and religious occasions. The very sight of an ascetic, particularly of naked *sanyāsins*, like the Ājīvikas, was treated with abhorrence, especially by the womenfolk, supposed to be the custodians of good manners then as now.[104] The *Arthaśāstra* also lays down an elaborate system of training persons in the art of espionage (*gūḍhapuruṣotpatti*) and of employing spies in different branches of secret service (*gūḍhapuruṣapraṇidhi*).[105] It appears from the rules of the system that spies could be recruited from the ascetics of different orders, *Muṇḍas* and *Jaṭilas*, hermits and wanderers.

The fact that Aśoka had a special consideration for the Ājīvikas is based on the trustworthy evidence of his inscriptions, which make a mention of the Ājīvika order at three different places. Literary sources also associate him with the Ājīvikas. The *Divyāvadāna* informs us that an Ājīvika ascetic attached to the court of Bindusāra had correctly prophesied the future greatness of the prince Aśoka. The ascetic is named Pingalavatsājīva and seems to have been a Mauryan court prognosticator. A *Jātaka* story preserves a tradition to the effect that astrology was almost a profession with the Ājīvikas even in the lifetime of the Buddha.[106] Asked by king Bindusāra to predict the future of the princes, the Ājīvika ascetic watched them at play and by various omens recognised that Aśoka would ascend the Mauryan throne. Pingalavatsa did not, however, tell the king his prophecy

and avoided giving a direct answer. Instead he told queen Subhadrāṅgi, the mother of Aśoka, about her son's future greatness. As advised by the queen he left the kingdom, lest the king force an answer from him. Later, he returned to the Mauryan court after the death of Bindusāra.[107] There is, on the same subject a slightly different account recounted in the *Vaṁsattha-ppakakāśinī*, where Ājīvika is said to have been a household ascetic (*kulūpaga*) of the queen. His name is given as Janasāna (Jarasona or Jarasāna) belonging to a Brāhmin family. He correctly prophesied Aśoka's future greatness on the basis of the pregnancy longings of the queen. He is said to have quit the court without specifying any reason. Aśoka, sometime after his accession, asked his mother if some prophet had forecast his prosperity. On being told that Janasāna had done so, he sent a deputation with a carriage to bring the Ājīvika to the palace. However, while on his way to Pāṭaliputra, Janasāna met the *thera* Assagutta, by whom he was converted and ordained in the Buddhist *saṅgha*.[108]

The details of the two accounts, as noted above, differ a great deal on important issues, such as, the name of the Ājīvika prognosticator, yet they cannot be deemed to lack a factual basis. The divergences, probably, show that the two texts drew their material independently from a widespread legend, which had evolved in the course of time. Further, the two texts belong to two different Buddhist traditions, northern and southern respectively. The story, thus, seems to owe its genesis to a real occurrence rather than to monkish flight of imagination. It has been observed that Bindusāra's interest in unorthodox philosophy is attested by classical sources. In the light of the above account it may be surmised that even before the launch of Aśoka's policy of religious toleration, the Ājīvikas were patronised by the Mauryan court.

The *Divyāvadāna* also furnishes the information that

Puṇḍravardhana was a stronghold of the Ājīvikas in the time of Aśoka. Further, the text relates that 18,000 Ājīvikas of Puṇḍravardhana had been massacred in a single day on the orders of Aśoka who was infuriated to learn that a Nirgrantha *upāsaka* had dishonoured the statue of the Buddha. Deeply hurt at similar sacrilege committed by another Nirgrantha *upāsaka* at Pāṭaliputra, the king is said to have offered in punishment a reward of one *dīnāra* for the head of every Nirgrantha brought to him. The latter wave of persecution resulted in the murder of king's own younger brother Vītāśoka.[109]

The term Nirgrantha and Ājīvika have been used loosely in the account of the *Divyāvadāna*, which might be referring to both sects indiscriminately. However, the story given in the *Divyāvadāna* is quite incredible and baseless for the simple reason that the Buddha is not known to have been represented in sculpture anywhere till the time of Aśoka.[110] The above account of the *Divyāvadāna* may, perhaps, be indicative of the fact that there may have been a tradition of hostility to Ājīvika and Nirgrantha orders, which may have erupted sporadically under the rule of some other monarchs leading to the persecution of their monks. It is highly improbable that Aśoka, the apostle of toleration, would have ever turned into such a monster. The only significant inference that may be drawn from the *Divyāvadāna's* story may be the fact that Ājīvikism was a popular movement in the Puṇḍravardhana area, which is also hinted by the story of Mahāpauma, mentioned earlier.

As against the above portrayal of Aśoka's hostility towards the Ājīvika sect and its pitiable condition in the age of the Mauryas, we get an entirely different picture of its popularity and prestige from the contemporary and reliable records of Aśokan epigraphs. The distinct picture emerges from his Seventh Pillar Edict and the dedicatory inscriptions found in the Barābar and Nāgārjunī caves. Only a single version of

the Seventh Pillar Edict is available on the Delhi-Toprā pillar. According to Hultzsch, it was issued in 237 BC, the twenty-seventh year of his reign.[111] Aśoka sums up in this edict the various measures which he adopted for the propagation of *dhamma*. He expressly states that he deployed his *dhammamahāmātras* for dispensing the royal favour to, and exercising supervision over the contemporary sects. The bodies among which the *dharma-mahāmātras* were busy were the four religious classes, i.e. (1) The Buddhist *saṅgha,* (2) Brāhmaṇas and Ājīvikas, (3) Nirgranthas and (4) Other heretics. It appears from the above desscription that Ājīvika *saṅgha* was a fully developed sect, which then stood on an equal footing with the other two ascetic orders. It is not relegated to the category of the other heretics. It is also interesting to note that the Ājīvikas are mentioned before the Nirgranthas, showing that the former sect was considered by the king to be either more influential or more worthy of support than the latter.[112]

Beside the above, there is more important evidence of the inscriptions in the artificial caves of the Barābar Hill, near Gayā. There are four such caves in the Barābar Hill, three of which contain Aśokan inscriptions. The first two of these three caves were donated to the Ājīvikas in the twelfth year of Aśoka's consecration.[113] The nearby hill of Nāgārjunī has three caves, similarly dedicated to the Ājīvikas by Daśaratha, a successor and grandson of Aśoka.[114] The evidence of the Nāgārjunī caves shows that the Ājīvikas continued to enjoy certain amount of respect from the people of Magadha and retained its hold on the liberality of the Mauryan rulers even after the benign rule of Aśoka. The Ājīvika influence continued in northern India for sometime more after the Mauryan rule. We have mentioned above, the notice taken by Patañjali (150 BC) while commenting on a *sūtra* (VI.I.154) of Pāṇini referring to Maskariṇa. A little later the *Milindapañho* (c.1st Cen. AD) takes notice of the fatalistic creed of Makkhali Gośāla, who is wrongly

represented as a contemporary of Milinda (Menander, c.155 BC), the Indo-Bactrian King.[115] After the second century BC the Ājīvika sect seems to have diappeared rapidly from northern India, though it survived longer in southern India.

NOTES

1. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britanica*, Vol.X, s.v. Jainism; John E. Cort, *Jains in the World*.
2. Cf. U.P. Shah, *Studies in Jaina Art*.
3. Cf. H. Jacobi, *Introduction, Jain Sūtras, SBE*, Vol. 45.
4. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 153; *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, J. Charpentier's Introduction, p. 21.
5. The Jaina tradition holds that every *Tīrthaṅkara* 'reanimates this ever present imperishable tradition,' Cf. Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, p. 2.
6. *Kalpasūtra*, Introduction p.8; Cf. C.J. Shah, *Jainism in North India,* pp. 27–28; K.C. Jain, *Lord Mahāvīra and His Times*, pp.30 ff.
7. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, p. 704 ff; S. Stevenson, *The Heart of Janism*, W. Schubring, *The Doctrine of the Jains*.
8. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 293.
9. Tara Sethia, ed. *Ahiṁsā, Anekānta and Jainism*, pp. 15 ff; Cf. Chirstopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth and Self in Asian Traditions*; Acharya Mahaprajna, *Astitva aur Ahiṁsā*.
10. S.B. Deo., *History of Jaina Monachism*, p. 76.
11. *Āvaśyakacūrṇī*, II, p. 164.
12. *Nāyādhammakahāo*, p. 146; *Ṭhānāṅga*, p. 4586; *Uttarādhyayana*, XX.
13. *Aupapātika Sūtra*, pp. 44–46.
14. *Bhāgavatī Sūtra*, p. 442.
15. *Ibid*, pp. 556 ff.
16. *Āvaśyakacūrṇī*, II, p. 207.
17. Cf. *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, p. 299; *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, 12.2; *Āvaśyakcūrṇī*, II, p. 91.
18. *Kalpasūtra* (*Jaina Sūtras*, I), p. 267: It is recorded that Chandanā, daughter of Rājā Cheṭaka, was a disciple of Mahāvīra. She remained unmarried and became a nun. She was head of 36 thousand nuns.
19. Details about lay votaries are given in the *Upāsakadasā*, the 7th *Aṅga* of the Jaina canon.
20. 10. 712.
21. A.K. Chatterjee, *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*, Vol.I, Cf. chap. on Jainism and Yakṣa Workship.
22. Cf. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XIV (1); Lüders, *List of Brahmi Inscriptions*, Nos. 904-05.

23. *Uttarādhyayana*, XX; *Triṣaṣṭiśalākā*, X, 6-11.
24. *Niryāvali Sūtra* absolves Kuṇika of patricide.
25. *Aupapātika Sūtra*, 12, 27, 30; *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, pp. 684, 687; *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, IV.
26. *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, 30.
27. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, VI, 24.
28. *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, p. 690; Cf. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 146; *JRAS*, 1918, p. 546; *JBORS*, XIII, p. 245.
29. According to one reading the epigraph refers to the 165th year (*panaṁtariya sathi vasa sata*) of the Maurya Kings (*Rājā-Mauriya kāla*). This would be the year 157-156 BC calculated from Chandragupta's ascension to the throne. Scholars like Rapson, Jayaswal, Smith, Sten Konow *et al* subscribe to this view. But the others dispute that the inscription gives this date.
30 '*Nandarāj nītaṁ ca Kaliṅgajina sannivesaṁ, ... gaha-ratnāna paḍihārehi*'.
31. *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, pp. 219–20.
32. p. 690.
33. *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, p. 692.
34. J. Jolly, *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya*, Int. pp. 10–11.
35. *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, XIII, 415ff.
36. *Ibid*, VIII, 435.
37. Cf. H. Jacobi, *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, p. 62.
38. R.P. Kangle, *op.cit.*, Pt. III, p. 155.
39. *Indian Antiquary*, III, pp. 153–58, *J.B.O.R.S.* III, p. 452.
40 *Z.D.M.G.*, xxxviii, 1884, pp. 1-42; S. Stevenson, *op.cit*, pp. 70–72.
41. *Tiloyapaññati*, IV, 1481.
42. Quoted S.B. Deo, *op.cit.*, p. 87.
43. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, pp. 294–95; C.J. Shah, *Jainism in North India*, pp. 135–38.
44. S.B. Deo, *op.cit.*, p. 89.
45. S.N. Dube, 'Religious Conviction of Aśoka', *University of Rajasthan Studies (History)*, 1965-66, Cf. E.J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*, p. 29.
46. R.E. XIII; cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I, Int. p. XLVIII.
47. P.E. VII; Cf. Jacobi, *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, p. 69.
48. Cf. *Divyāvadāna*, ed. Cowell and Neil, p. 430; F.E. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age,* pp. 28, 70.
49. Cf. H. Jacobi, *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, pp. 63-64; *Divyāvadāna*, ed. Cowell and Neil, p. 433.
50. Cf. *Indian Antiquary*, XXI, pp. 57-58; H. Jacobi, *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*, p. 69.
51. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 351.
52. *J.B.O.R.S.*XVI, pp. 29–31.
53. T. Watters, *On yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol.I, pp. 371.ff.
54. Cf. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XX, pp. 71 ff.

55. Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol.XXII, p. 288.
56. Para 156.
57. Para 26.
58. 89.2 ff.
59. Cf. *J.R.A.S.* 1905, pp. 635–655.
60. S.B. Deo, *op.cit.*, p. 79.
61. D.P. Singhal, *India and World Civilization*, p. 48.
62. A.K. Chatterjee, *op.cit.*, p. 79.
63. Cf. R.B. Whitehead, *Catalogue of Coins in the Punjab Museum*, Vol. I (Indo-Greek Coins).
64. *Indian Antiquary* XI, pp. 247–51; M. Stevenson, *op.cit.*, pp. 78ff.
65. S. Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p. 68 n.
66. Cf. *Sacred Books of the East*, XXII, pp. 286–87.
67. S.B. Deo, *op.cit.* pp. 78 ff.
68. Cf. A. Chakravarti, *Jain Literature in Tamil.*
69. *Āvaśyaka Bhāṣya*, Verse 145 ff quoted S.B. Deo, *op.cit.*, p. 80.
70. S. Stevenson, *op.cit.*, p. 70.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
72. Cf. Norman Brown, *The Story of Kālaka.*
73. *Āchārāṅga Sūtra*, 6.3.182; *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, 2.12.
74. For common legends inherited by Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras and identical *gāthās* Cf. A.N. Upadhye's Introduction to *Bṛhatkathākośa*, pp. 73–80.
75. Cf. Padmanabh S. Jaini, 'The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism: A study in Contrast,' *Studies in the History of Buddhism*, ed. A.K. Narain, pp. 84–85.
76. *Dīgha Nikāya*, I, pp. 46–48; *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, pp. 248ff.
77. Cf. *Brahmajāla* and *Sāmaññaphala Suttas* of *Dīgha Nikāya*; S.N. Dube, *Cross Currents in Early Buddhism*, pp. 13 ff; B.M. Barua, *Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, chap. XIII.
78. Cf. A.F.R. Hoernle's appendix to *Uvāsagadasāo*; ERE, Vol. I, pp. 259ff.
79. *J.B.O.R.S.*, Vol. XII, p. 54.
80. A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 27ff; Cf B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, Pt.I, pp. 2 ff.
81. *Jaina Sūtras*, XLV, Introduction, xxix-xxx; Cf A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 240 ff; N.N. Bhattāchārya, *Jain Philosophy in Historical Outline*, pp. 177ff.
82. B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, pp. 22, 44ff.
83. The rules of the Ājīvikas set forth in the *Aupapātika Sūtra* (Leuman's edition) in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (PTS) I.p. 318 and *Dīgha Nikāya* (PTS) I.p. 165.
84. Cf. *Pārājika*, p. 306; *Pācittiya*, p. 128.
85. *'N' atthi purisakāre, n' atthi balaṁ, n' atthi viriyaṁ, n' atthi purisa-parakammo.*

Sabbe sattā ... avasā abalā aviriyā niyati-saṅgati-bhāva-pariṇatā, Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya*, I, pp. 46–48; *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, pp. 34, 267; *Majjhima Nikāya*, pp. 248, 292, 308.

86. *Seyyathā pi nāma sutta-guḷe khitte nibbethiyamānam eva phaleti, evam eva bāle ca pandite ca sandhāvitvī saṁsaritvā dukkhass' antaṁ karissanti, Ibid*; Cf. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, 72-73; *Jātaka*, VI, 225 ff.
87. 4.309; Cf. *Naṅguṭṭha Jātaka*, I, no. 144.
88. *Pācittiya*, p. 106.
89. *Majjhima Nikāya* (PTS) I, p. 31.
90. B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, Pt. I. p. 15.
91. A.L. Basham, *The History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 24ff.
92. B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, p. 39.
93. J.C. Jain, *op.cit.*, pp. 310–11.
94. According to A.L. Basham, the Dravidian Ājīvikas developed their doctrine in a maner as to resemble the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Consequently Gośāla, the founder of the sect, was raised to the status of a divinity, like the Buddha in Mahāyāna. They held that all changes and movements were illusory and the world was, in fact, eternally and immovably at rest. This view resembles the doctrine of 'void' or '*śūnyatā*', as propounded by the Mādhyamika philospher Nāgārjuna.
95. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, VI.I.154 – *Maskara-maskariṇo veṇu – Parivrājakayoḥ*.
96. Cf. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol.XLI, 1912, p. 289.
97. *Sūtra Kritāṅga*, II. 6; cf. *Jaina Sūtras*, II, p.411; *Majjhima Nikāya*, (PTS), I. p. 238; *Aṅguttarā Nikāya*, (PTS), I, p. 83; *Viśākhavatthu*, IV no. 8.
98. B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, pp. 58–59; A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 142–145.
99. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No.1, p. 12.
100. *Vaṁsattha-ppakāśinī*, Vol. I, p. 183.
101. *Mahāvaṁsa*, X, 101-102.
102. A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, p. 146.
103. *Arthaśāstra, 3.20.16.*
104. *Dhammapada Commentary*, p. 400.
105. *Arthaśāstra*, Chapters XI, XII.
106. Cf. *Kathāsaritsāgar*, Taranga XIII, No. 68.
107. *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 370 ff.
108. *Vaṁsattha-ppakāśinī*, Vol.I, p. 190.
109. *Divyāvadāna*, p. 427.
110. Cf. B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, p. 69; A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, p. 148.
111. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol.I, pp. 131 ff.
112. A.L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 149–150.
113. Cf. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol.I, p. 181.
114. Cf. *Indian Antiquary*, XX, pp. 361 ff.
115. Cf. *Milindapañho*, pp. 4–5, quoted B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, p. 70.

IX

THEISTIC MOVEMENTS

The systems of religious and philosophical thought that grew up in Indian cultural soil have been varied and vigorous. It is also clear that most of them are rooted in the Vedic thought. Even the Buddhists and the Jainas, who revolted against the authority of the Brāhmaṇas and the efficacy of the Vedic *yajñas* and rituals, did not deem it proper to go against the prevalent customs and practices of the people. Instead, they tried to replace some of them by similar practices in order to be acceptable to the people. They did try to get rid of those Brāhmaṇical rituals which entailed killing of life. In the case of Vedic *yajña* the Buddha opposed the killing of animals, but approved a *yajña* performed otherwise.[1] The diversity of religious and philosophical thought in India resulted in newer understanding, innovative interpretations, novel expositions and widening of spheres of thought. Orthodox Hindu society always allowed saintly reformers to preach heterodoxy and carve out separate communities of their followers.

The Vedic view was essentially theistic. It remained dormant under the thrust of ritualism of the early period and gnosticism of the later times. Towards the end of the Vedic age, devotional theism tended to develop in sects like the Pāśupata and Pāñcarātra which disclaimed any Vedic roots. It was almost after a millennium that the *Purāṇas* gradually wove the multiplex fabric of *karman, jñāna* and *bhakti* wherein the dichotomy of Vedic and non-Vedic tended to be dissipated.[2] Successive *ācāryas* strove to

formulate a new orthodoxy and saints and reformers made it a movement at the mass level. There can be no gainsaying, however, that the form in which the new devotional sects appear in the early post-Vedic period, they did not regard themselves as simply derived from the Vedic tradition, nor did the Vedic orthodoxy regard them as such at that time. It is evident that between Vedic Viṣṇu and Rudra and their worship, on the one side, and the Pāñcarātra and Pāśupata cults, on the other, there is a certain break due, probably, to the intrusion of non-Vedic influences. Dravidian or Harappan origin of these cults has been propounded by scholars and if that be true they ought to have gradually interacted with similar Vedic cults till new identities evolved, being part Vedic and part non-Vedic.

The Buddhist Pāli work *Niddesa*[3] furnishes a list of religious systems categorising them under two groups of disciples (schools) and devotees (sects) – (a) Disciples: the Ājīvikas, the Nirganthas, the Jaṭilas, the Parivrājakas and the Aviruddhakas. (b) Devotees: worshippers of Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Puṇṇabhaddadeva, Maṇibhaddadeva, Aggi, Caṇḍa, Suriya, Inda, Brahmā, Deva, etc. It may be recalled that in one of his edicts Aśoka remarks that men are usually associated with one or other of the sects, and that a tolerant monarch inveighs against the extolling of one's own sect to the disparagement of others (*ātmapāṣaṁḍapūjā parapāṣaṁḍagarahā*). He observes that there is no country where these two classes, the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas do not exist, except among the Yonas, and there is no place in any country where men are not indeed attached to some sect.[4] Another Aśokan edict alludes to the existence of various religious orders, e.g. Saṅgha (Buddhists), Brāhmaṇas, Ājīvikas, Nirgranthas and various other sects.

The *Niddesa* list seems to point to a time when the religious sects started deifying, more or less, their heroes. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* contains an older list of ten religious orders

of which five only are mentioned in the first list of *Niddesa* while in its second category are included the various groups of devotees which are not to be found in the former.[6] The anomaly in the two lists can perhaps be due to the fact that some of the orders had disappeared by the time the *Niddesa* list was drawn, e.g. Muṇḍasāvakas; or that the older list was considered as redundant, e.g. Parivrājakas and Tedaṇḍikas; or that the *Niddesa* groups of devotees were loosely included under one name, e.g. Devadhammikas the worshippers of deities, in general or Devavatikas. By Devadhammikas or Devavatikas were meant the people at large who seem to have been divided into diverse groups of worshippers. The Devadhamma was essentially a religion of *bhakti* and as such its attitude was emotional and its form ritualistic or ceremonial. It may be added that some deities and forms of worship mentioned in the *Niddesa* are referred to in Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*[7] and the Jaina *Upāṅga* the *Aupātika Sūtra*. The former speaks of devotion to Mahārāja, Vāsudeva, Arjuna, Sun, Indra, Fire, clan and country, while the latter refers approvingly to the faith in Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Cakkavattī (Mahārāja or Emperor). The occurrence in *Pāli* works of terms like Devaddhammikas and Devavatikās to distinguish the masses from the ascetics as the worshippers of gods and Pāṇini's mention of the devotees of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣna as Vāsudevakas shows that the cult of *bhakti* was in existence in fifth century BC. Thus, the age that followed the early *Upaniṣads* saw new developments in religious thought with a view to removing the deficiencies of the Vedic religion. The new developments in religious thought were spearheaded by the Buddhists, Jainas and Bhāgavatas. All of them tend to be a movement against, or at least a decided break from the established religious order of the day. And it is, perhaps, not coincidental that all of them originated in the free atmosphere of autonomous republican tribes, the Śākyas, Licchavis and Sātvatas, respectively.

As noted above, the very idea of Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Cakkavattī being adored by the Jainas among prominent personalities (*śalākāpuruṣas*) evinces a process of interaction going on between the different religious movements and orders. Three different records of the Brāhmaṇas, the Jainas and the Buddhists are in agreement with a possibility of interaction and miscegenation of ideas and beliefs upheld by rival sects. The adoration of Cakkavattī (Emperor) as a god along with others has been interpreted by scholars to mean that it is likely that the process of deification in religion and state may have run parallel to the rise of the Magadhan empire.[8] The religio-philosophic culture of the period BC 400–200 is, thus, the result of the above interaction between the contending forces. Some significant developments characterise the religious life of the period, e.g. (a) Bhāgavata movement emerging as an orthodox faith as a result of the identification of Kṛṣṇa with the Vedic god Viṣṇu, (b) evolution of Śaivism into a complete theistic system within the orthodox fold, (c) popularisation of reorganised religion through the celebrated epics *Rāmayāṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, (d) Buddhism and Jainism alone being left out of the pale of orthodoxy to continue the movement. They steadily gained in strength and popularity and for quite some time were able to outshine their rivals. Features such as the above, originating during the period from 400 to 200 BC, continued to characterise the religious life for about the next five hundred years (200 BC to 300 AD).

Thus, the rise of some of the new theistic movements, which later on became the religion of the people at large, may be assigned to the early historical period. Some of the primary characteristics of the two prominent ones, viz. Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism comprised *bhakti* (devotion) and *prasāda* (grace). *Bhakti* is to be understood as intense love towards the worshipped god, a devotion to the extent of complete self-surrender. *Prasāda* means the grace or mercy

on the part of god, which bestows salvation to the devotee. The quest for god and the quest for immortality developed as two aspects of the devotional faith. Salvation could be achieved through his grace (*prasāda*) by *bhakti* or intense love and devotion and by complete surrender to him. The devotion to the god might be purely spiritual but it was usually manifested by *pūjā*, the ritual of worship and service of an idol of the god by bathing, offering food, water, flower, etc. Just as sacrificial ritualism characterised the early Vedic religion, renunciation the Upaniṣadic philosophy, asceticism the Jaina and Buddhist movements, *pūjā* was the underlining feature of neo-Hinduism. Image worship unknown in the Vedic period, now became a regular feature of neo-Hinduism. Henceforth, Bhāgavatism, more popularly known as Vaiṣṇavism, with Śaivism, formed the main planks of Brāhmaṇism in its contest with Buddhism and Jainism. The other important representatives of neo-Hinduism were Śāktism, Gaṇapatism, Saura cult, etc. The new trends of thought are embodied in the *Purāṇas* composed in veneration of these gods. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is a landmark in the evolution of theism and *bhakti* and the Śaiva sect. Similarly, the echoes of the *Chāndogya, Īśa* and *Kena Upaniṣads* are more than clear in the *Gītā* which begins a new chapter in the history of devotional theism. The *Gītā* categorically affirms that the worship of the personal god is superior to the contemplation of the impersonal absolute.[9] According to *Gītā*, one should perform one's duties for the fulfilment of god's purpose or, in other words, for the forwarding of universal life.[10] The duties that a person has to perform are those of his station in life, but he ought to do them sublimating his will entirely to the divine will. This is the way of dedicating all work to the Lord (*Īśvarārtha*) and is described as *bhakti-yoga* or 'the way of devotion'. The exclusive worshippers of particular deities were grouped under different heads which came gradually to be described

as one or the other sect. Curiously enough, while the prominent Vedic deities, e.g. Indra, Prajāpati, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni and such others could not emerge as sectarian deities, some others of the same pantheon like Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Rudra and the cosmic god Nārāyaṇa came to be combined in the composite cult-deities of different sects.

Among the major theistic movements Vaiṣṇavism (Bhāgavatism) stands for the religion of which Viṣṇu or Hari is the object of worship and devotion as the supreme god, the god of gods. The necessity of worshipping him with devotion in preference to older methods of sacrifices and austerities was greatly underlined. The germ of Viṣṇu's later greatness and the origin of sectarian Vaiṣṇavism have, sometimes, been traced back to the *Ṛg Veda*. It has been argued that there is sufficient number of hymns in the *Ṛg Veda*, some of which are also reproduced in the *Yajurveda* and *Sāmaveda*, which speak of Viṣṇu as the highest personal god, who is the sole creator and controller of the universe and the saviour of humanity. In some places Viṣṇu is addressed along with Indra and Agni and is regarded as a solar deity (Āditya). However, it is a moot point whether *bhakti* as a religious doctrine can be traced to early Vedic period, but it certainly was not the prominent mode of worship. Some scholars have traced its antecedents in the Upaniṣadic idea of *upāsanā* or fervent meditation.[11] It is pointed out that in the *Bṛhadāraṇyka Upaniṣad ātman* (soul) is extolled as dearer than a son, wealth and every other thing.[12] This may be taken as the nearest idea of *bhakti* with the substitution of the impersonal *ātman* for a personal god. The religion centring upon a personal god who originally seems to have been a human hero was that of the Bhāgavatas or the Pāñcarātras. It later came to be known as Vaiṣṇavism and became one of the most popular Brāhmaṇical creeds of India. The Vedic Āditya-Viṣṇu appear to have very little to do with the early formative stage of Bhāgavatism.

According to the Epic and the Purāṇic traditions, the Bhāgavatas worshipped Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, the Sātvata or Vṛṣṇi chief and some of his relations. The historicity of Vāsudava-Kṛṣṇa has been questioned by some scholars who consider him to be a mythical figure evolved out of a solar deity, a tribal god,[13] or even a vegetarian spirit. However, these views rest on superficial grounds, to say the least. Other scholars have argued on the basis of sufficient data that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was a great human hero, who was deified by his followers at an uncertain date, emerging as the nucleus of a great *bhakti* cult, later prevalent throughout the country.[14] A reference to the founder of this sect has been traced in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which refers to Kṛṣṇa-Devakīputra, the disciple of Ghora Aṅgirasa, who taught Kṛṣṇa 'so that he never thirsted again'. The *Mahābhārata* also mentions Kṛṣṇa as having descended and as a *ṛitvij*, adept in the *Vedāṅga* and the scripture of Āṅgirasa as the noblest *śruti*.[15] From his master Kṛṣna learnt a unique view of sacrificial offerings, as well as the nature of the self as Absolute. According to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Ghora Aṅgirasa taught Kṛṣna that the righteous conduct – the practice of the virtues of austerity, charity, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness – was as efficacious as fees given to a sacrificing priest.

The earliest trace, in historical times, of devotional worship of a personal god, out of which Vaiṣṇavism arose, is to be found in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (5th century BC). In his *sūtra* IV.3.98, Pāṇini states that 'the affix *vun* is added to the name of Vāsudeva and Arjuna in the sense of the worshipful one.[16] The derivative forms, Vāsudevaka and Ārjunaka would, thus, mean respectively, 'the devotees of Vāsudeva' and 'the devotees of Arjuna.' Patañjali, while commenting on this aphorism, observes that in this case the names are, probably, not to be taken as the names of the Kṣatriya heroes but as the designation of the *tatrabhavat* – 'the adorable one'.[17] There is, therefore, sufficient reason to believe that

the cults of Vāsudeva and Arjuna were current during the time of Pāṇini. It is also undoubted that Pāṇini was acqainted not only with the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* but with the epic itself. That Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa was the object of devotion, at least as early as fourth century BC, is proved by the statements of Megasthenes, Quintus Curtius, Strabo and other classical writers. Arrian quoting from Megasthenes's *Indica* tells us that 'Heracles was worshipped by the inhabitants of the plains, especially by the Sourasenoi, an Indian tribe possessed of two cities, Methora (Mathurā) and Cleisobora (Kṛṣṇapura?) and who had a large navigable river, the Jabores (Yamunā) flowing through their territories.' Curtius informs us that 'an image of Heracles was carried in front of the enemy of Porus as he advanced against Alexander.'[18] Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa as the inspirer of soldiers in Porus's army reminds one of the same god inspiring the diffident Arjuna to fight for victory.[19] The Greek writers were, perhaps, justified in identifying their divine hero Heracles with Vāsudeva, for this Indian Heracles, according to Arrian, had a very numerous progeny of male children born to him by his many wives.

The historicity of Vāsudeva as the son of Vāsudeva of the Vṛṣṇi-Sātvata sept of the Yadu or Yādava clan should not be questioned. The crucial part played by this clan and the significant role of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* war is graphically narrated in the epic and the *Purāṇas*. This hero of the Yādava clan, who became the leader of a religious movement, was deified and styled Bhāgavata. This process was completed by the second century BC, at the latest, for the epigraphic records of this period amply confirm that the cult of Vāsudeva was being widely followed not only by the people of the country but also by some alien settlers of India.

The famous Garuḍadhvaja Pillar inscription at Besnagar (Vidiśā) refers to Heliodorus, the Greek ambassador of the

Indo-Greek king Antialcidas as a devotee of Vāsudeva, the god of gods.[20] Almost contemporaneously and in the same place, another devotee of Vāsudeva named Gautamīputra raised a *garuḍa* column in front of the temple of the Bhāgavata. These epigraphic records clearly support what is already known from literary evidence regarding Vāsudeva's association with *garuḍa*[21] and, therefore, with Viṣṇu, with the Vṛṣṇi hero Saṅkarṣaṇa, as well as with Nārāyaṇa.

From the literary and archaeological sources it is clear that in the last few centuries of the pre-Christian period Bhāgavatism had its main centre in the Madhyadeśa with Mathurā as its nucleus, while other cults of Śiva, Śakti and the Sun had their rise mainly, if not absolutely, outside the Aryandom. The Bhāgavata movement which developed on the banks of Yamunā finally coalesced with a few Brāhmaṇical and popular cults to form the great federation of religions known as Vaiṣṇavism. This union was effected by: (a) The *Vyūha* doctrine by which Vāsudevism united with Saṅkarṣaṇa worship to form Bhāgavatism; (b) The doctrine of *avatāra* which effected a synthesis between Bhāgavatism and the cult of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa and gave birth to Vaiṣṇavism; and (c) The *Puruṣa-Prakṛti* theory by virtue of which the cult of Śrī was engrafted on Vaiṣṇavism. The cult of devotional monotheism, thus, which emerged among the Sātvata-Vṛṣṇis of the region of Mathurā around the 5th-4th centuries BC,[22] included the contending notions of Kṛṣṇa as *avatāra*, and Vṛṣṇi *vīras* as *vyūhas*. The several streams may have coalesced in the Sātvata-Bhāgavata movement and its principles were systematised in the *Pāñcarātra-Saṁhitā*. The contribution of the *Purāṇas* in general and the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* in particular is significant in developing the Vaiṣṇava doctrines. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* is deemed to be the oldest and the most authoritative *Purāṇa*. It presents the basic doctrines, both philosophical and theological, of Vaiṣṇavism.

Vāsudeva was, thus, no longer a hero-god like Arjuna, as

represented in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, but the greatest god, the god of gods, as mentioned in the Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus. This evolution in the conception of the god must have taken a fairly long time. The first stage in the evolution of Bhāgavatism was the identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with the Vedic deity Viṣṇu. This seems to have been accomplished by the time the *Bhagavadgītā* was composed and, henceforth the cult of Vāsudeva or the Bhāgavata religion became also known as Vaiṣṇava *dharma*. Another step in the same process was the identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu with a deified sage or hero named Nārāyaṇa who was regarded as Hari, the deity, eternal, supreme and lord. The earliest evidence with regard to the identification of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa has been traced in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*.[23] R.G. Bhandarkar is of the view that Nārāyaṇa has a cosmic character and is not a historical or mythological individual. He interprets the term Nārāyaṇa as the resting place or goal of *nara* or a collection of *naras* (i.e. men).[24] D.C. Sircar, on the other hand, takes Nārāyaṇa to be an ancient leader of thought born in the family of another sage named Nara. Both of them, probably, being the advocates of solar worship, resulted in their identification, especially of the former with the solar god Viṣṇu. It is likely that the Nārāyaṇa cult may have originated somewhere in the Himālayan region or a place close by. The worshippers of the deified sage Nārāyaṇa may have been originally known as Pāñcarātrikas, who were later mixed up with the Bhāgavatas worshipping Vāsudeva.

As regards the cult of Saṅkarṣaṇa, we do not know as to whether or not it had emerged along with the cult of Vāsudeva. Saṅkarṣaṇa, being the elder brother of Vāsudeva, belonged to the Vṛṣṇi clan. He hardly plays any significant role in the *Mahābhārata* war as compared with his younger brother. Nonetheless, he is projected as a hero, endowed with tremendous power, which he exercises rarely. His sole

obsession seems to be wine, a fact which finds support from the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya wherein there is a mention of the votaries of Saṅkarṣaṇa, mixing their sacrificial beverage with the juice of *madana* plant and giving it to the cowherds to carry off their cattle.[25] The classical accounts make a mention of Dionysus (Dionusos) also, apart from Heracles identified with Vāsudeva. According to Megasthenes, the Oxydrakai[26] claimed descent from Dionysus, 'because the vine grew in their country and their kings on going forth to war and on other occasions marched in Bacchic fashion with drums beating.' The cult of Dionysus with its Baccanalian characteristics is taken by some scholars to be reminiscent of the cult of Saṅkarṣaṇa.[27] However, overwhelming opinion of scholars is in favour of identifying the cult of Dionysus with that of the cult of Śiva rather than that of Saṅkarṣaṇa. Sātakarṇi I, the third king of the Sātavāhana dynasty is reported in the Nānāghāt Cave inscription of Nāyanikā (Nāganikā) to have been a worshipper of Saṅkarṣaṇa along with Vāsudeva and other deities.[28]

Bhāgavatism spread far and wide as a result of coalition and reconciliation of the Vāsudeva cult with the Brāhmaṇical and popular cults. In the inscriptions of Aśoka, as noted above, there is reference to *pāsaṇḍas* in the sense of religious sects. He mentions Brāhmaṇas, Śramaṇas, as well as other sects. It is, however, not clear as to whether the category of other sects included the theistic sects like Bhāgavatism or not? Aśoka had also initiated the practice of organising certain edifying shows for the benefit of the people to be educated in the lores of Buddhism.[39] It is not unlikely that similar other shows for the edification of the non-Buddhist popular cults may also have been prevalent in the society. Patañjali refers to '*devamaha*' which were ceremonies or shows dedicated to deites and the congregations on such occasions were, called '*samāja*'. An interesting account, furnished by Curtius, has been noted above which tells us that an image of Heracles

was carried in front of the infantry of Porus in his battle with Alexander, and that it acted as the strongest of all incentives to make the soldiers fight courageously. To desert the bearers of the image was considered an act of betrayal and the offenders were liable to be punished with death. A curious passage occurring in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali tells us that the Mauryas got manufactured the images of gods (*arcā*) to be sold in order to raise the state revenue.[30] The evidences, mentioned above, would show that images of gods and their cults were known in the country in the Mauryan times. It is possible that their prevalence may have been confined only among the common people.

By about the close of the Mauryan period Vidiśā (Besnagar) in Madhya Pradesh and Madhyamikā (Chittor) in Rajasthan had emerged as important centres of Bhāgavatism. Reference has already been made to the Besnagar inscription (2nd century BC) of Heliodorus, the ambassador of Antialcidas, the Indo-Greek king of Taxila, to the Śuṅga king Kāśīputra Bhāgabhadra of Vidiśā. The inscription mentions *devadeva* Vāsudeva, the chosen god of Heliodorus, a convert to the Bhāgavata creed. A variety of archaeological evidence in the form of inscriptions, sculptures etc., have been recovered to trace the spread of Bhāgavatism in Rajasthan from second century BC onwards. The well-known Ghosuṇḍī or Nagarī (ancient Madhyamikā, situated eight miles north of Chittor) inscription clearly indicates that Nagarī (Madhyamikā) was an important seat of Bhāgavatism. The inscription throws a flood of light not only on its geographical expansion but also on the development of the religion. It refers to king Sarvatāta, of whose territory Ghosuṇḍī formed part, as a devotee of the Bhāgavata religion. He got constructed a stone enclosure for the place of worship (*pūjā-śīla-prākāra*) at a locality called Nārāyaṇa Vāṭaka and dedicated the shrine to gods Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, who were lords of all.[32] He got three versions

of the inscription engraved on massive stone blocks of the enclosure at three different places. Archaeological excavations have brought to light the remains of a rectangular stone enclosure with walls nearly ten feet high at the sight of Hāthībārā near Nagarī. It is interesting to observe that only two forms (or *vyūhas*), 'Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva' have developed by this time and Saṅkarṣaṇa has been given the prior position (*Saṅkarṣaṇa-Vāsudevābhyāṁ*).[33] Buhler has assigned this inscription to the period between BC 350 and 250. The record cannot be of any date later than that of Aśoka in the opinion of some scholars.[34] Another Brāhmī inscription of about the second century BC has been found recently on a pillar at Aṁvaleshvara, near Pratapgarh, again in the Chittor district of Rajasthan. The new record is quite interesting as it specifically refers to the installation of a stone pillar (*śaila-bhujā*) by a devotee of the Bhāgavata cult.[35] These two inscriptions of pre-Christian era throw significant light on the deep impact of Bhāgavatism in south-eastern Rajasthan.

The continued popularity and spread of Bhāgavatism in different parts of Rajasthan during the subsequent times is attested by a number of inscriptions. It seems that the geographical triangle formed by Mathurā, Vidiśā and Madhyamikā in the pre-Christian centuries proved to be the cradle of Bhāgavata movement to steadily progress throughout the whole country and flourish side by side with other theistic and monastic sects. Some recent archaeological finds are worthy of note in this regard. The four-armed life-size statue, probably the earliest stone image of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu has been discovered from Malhār (Bilāspur, Chhattisgarh). The image is inscribed in the early Mauryan Brāhmī. The one line inscription incised on the mace states that the image was caused to be made by a lady Bhāradvajā, wife of Parṇadatta.[36] Similarly, we have got some rare bronze coins of the Indo-Greek ruler, Agathocles (2nd cen. BC)

discovered from Ai-Khanum in Afganistan, bearing on the obverse the standing figure of Lord Kṛṣṇa holding a *cakra* and on the reverse the standing figure of Balarāma, holding *hala* and *mūsala*.[37]

The above mentioned evidences of a fairly early date throw considerable light on the spread of Bhāgavatism in different parts of India. More such evidence must have been lost and had all of them been recovered we would have got a more comprehensive account of the widespread popularity of this movement. Attention has been drawn already to places, such as Mathurā, Vidiśā and Madhyamikā which have yielded valuable archeological finds to support their importance as being key centres. Several fragmentary inscriptions, datable to the first century BC have been discovered at Vidiśā, which refer to the excellent temple of the Bhāgavata (*bhāgavato pāsādottamo*). Evidently, this refers to a Vāsudeva shrine and it is likely that there were many such temples in the locality existing from a period much earlier than the first century BC. It is reasonable to presume that Heliodorus, the Yavana devotee of Bhāgavatism, may have installed the *garuḍadhvaja* column in front of some such shrine. The Garuḍa capital of the inscribed column has not been found, but another *garuḍa*-shaped capital of a shaft has been recovered from its vicinity. Two other crowning pieces of columns, devoid of their shafts, have been discovered from there, which demonstrates the importance of the place as a seat of the cult. One of these crowning pieces is shaped as a *tāla* (fan-palm), while the other is shaped as a *makara* (crocodile), and these *tāla* and *makara-dhvajas* were obviously dedicated to Kṛṣṇa's kinsmen (Saṅkarṣaṇa and Pradyumna), whose individual shrines might have existed there. It may be added that a *tāla-dhvaja* capital found at Padam Pawāyā (ancient Padmāvatī) near Gwālior indicates the probability of another Saṅkarṣaṇa shrine in that region. Alexander Cunningham had discovered at Besnagar two huge stone sculptures

datable to third-second century BC. One of these has been taken to be the image of goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī, intimately associated with the Bhāgavata cult, and the other as a banyan capital containing the *aṣṭanidhis* of which she was the presiding deity.[39] Attention may be drawn to a relief panel discovered from Bharhut which shows the figures of a horse riding female and a male holding a *garuḍa-dhvaja*. The male figure is following the elephant riding king, perhaps, named Revatī Mitra. The names Revatī Mitra and his queen Chāpādevī are revealed by a brief inscription inscribed in the upper part of the relief. It seems that Revatī Mitra was a Bhāgavata by faith.[40] Mathurā, known from Indian and foreign texts to be the hub of Bhāgavatism, has also yielded significant archaeological remains. One of the earliest images of Saṅkarṣaṇa, preserved in the Lucknow Museum, has come from Mathurā and has been assigned to the second century BC. Its surroundings have also yielded epigraphic records bearing on the popularity of this cult. The Morā Well inscription of the time of Mahākṣatrapa Śoḍāsa (early first century AD) records the construction of a stone temple (*śaila devagṛha*), by a lady named Tośā, probably of foreign origin for the installation of the images of the five holy Vṛṣṇi *vīras* (*Bhāgavataṁ Vṛṣṇīnāṁ pañcavīrānāṁ pratimā*).[41] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* names the *pañcavīras* as Saṅkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Sāṁba and Aniruddha. Another inscription, belonging again to the time of Mahākṣatrapa Śoḍāsa mentions the erection of the *devakula* comprising a *toraṇa* (gateway) *vedikā* (railing) and *catuḥśāla* (quadrangle) at the *Mahāsthāna* ('great or very sacred place') of Bhagavāna Vāsudeva.[42] The *mahāsthāna*, mentioned in the inscription, may be signifying the birth place of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is again from the same region that one of the earliest relief illustrating the scene of Kṛṣṇa – Janmāṣṭamī and datable to the second century AD was found.

Various archaeological remains further help us in

sketching the expansion of Bhāgavatism in other parts of the country from the first century BC onwards. The copper coins of the Pañcāla king Viṣṇumitra depict four-armed figure of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu on them.[43] An object held in his upper left hand has been identified as a *cakra*. A similar representation of the four-armed Viṣṇu, with *saṅkha, cakra, gadā* and a ring like object appears in a Kuṣāṇa seal-matrix attributed by Cunningham to Huviṣka. Vāsudeva is the name taken by the last Kuṣāṇa ruler. The Nānāghāt (Maharashtra) and Chinna (Andhra Pradesh) inscriptions show the spread of the cult in distant parts of India. A number of seals and sealings recovered from Basārh (Vaiśālī) and Bhītā bear the very common symbol of *cakra* and *śaṅkha. Cakra* has been interpreted as *sudarśana-cakra* rather than the Buddhist *dharma-cakra* and the *śaṅkha* as a Vaiṣṇava device rather than a mere auspicious symbol.[44] It may be noted that Basārh (Vaiśālī) is a famous ancient site known since the time of *Rāmayāṇa.* In the age of Buddha it was the capital of powerful Licchavis. At a place called Kolhū in the area of ancient Vaiśālī stands the fifty feet high lion capital Aśokan column of which only eighteen feet portion is above the ground. Bhītā near Allahabad was again an important cultural and commercial centre of which the earliest antiquities are datable to the Mauryan period. Numerous seals and sealings of later times bearing Vaiṣṇava motifs have been found from different places. The inscribed ones have their legends in the early Gupta Brāhmī characters. Thus, different sources go to indicate that the progress of this religion continued unabated since about the second century BC and penetrating beyond the Vindhya, it gained a firm footing in deep South. Between sixth and ninth centuries Vaiṣṇavism was popularised in the South by a class of devotees called the 'Ālvārs' whose devotional songs known as *Nālāyira Divyaprabhandham* not only enriched the Tamil literature but the depth of their feelings and piety made it the Vaiṣṇava

Veda. The Ālvārs belonged to diverse castes and the love of god of which they sang carried within it the possibility of a socially levelling and reforming – even revolutionary doctrine. However, the mild and quietist temper of the Ālvārs hampered the realisation of such historical possibilities.[45]

Śaivism is the other equally powerful theistic sect which developed side by side with Vaiṣṇavism. The cult centres round Śiva or better still Rudra-Śiva, who, according to its followers is the supreme creator, ruler and pervader of the universe and a knowledge of whom contributes to eternal bliss. Śiva has been adored as the highest god in several *Purāṇas.* In its god-concept or the amalgam of such concepts Śaivism, unlike Vaiṣṇavism, was mythical in character. The hoary antiquity of Śiva worship is now very much accepted and a number of scholars are inclined to trace the existence of Śaivism from the time of Harappan Civilisation. A three-faced male deity meditating, wearing a horned head-dress, seated cross-legged and flanked by animals is shown on a seal discovered from Mohenjodaro. S.J. Marshall proposed the identification of this deity with Paśupati or prototype of Śiva.[46] If such a view is accepted then the cult of Śiva will have to be taken as India's earliest religion. However, based on the evidence of a solitary 'roughly carved seal,' it is open to question that all the specific attributes of Śiva, as Maheśa, Mahāyogin, Paśupati and Dakṣiṇāmurtī, were anticipated in the remote age. In his keenness to discover the origin of Śaivism in this Indus Valley seal the learned archaeologist advances so many hypotheses that the less imaginative reader begins to have doubts about the whole exercise. While various other animals are shown flanking the deity his favourite mount bull is conspicuous by its absence, which impairs the proposed identification a great deal.

R.G. Bhandarkar and several others have supposed that a non-Aryan influence ought to be seen in the development of Vedic Rudra as a 'dreaded god'.[47] The Vedic god Rudra,

with his dual nature of a dreadful one and at the same time that of a benevolent one, was identified with the pre-Vedic divinity who came to be known chiefly as Śiva to the late Vedic and subsequent times. It is quite possible that from the amalgamation of this and allied god-concepts of the pre-Vedic, Vedic and post-Vedic ages, the Śaiva cult may have emerged gradually. The Ṛgvedic god Rudra was a malevolent spirit, known for destroying the cattle and causing disease to the people. The terrific Rudra-Śiva lurks in horrible places like battlefields, burning grounds and crossroads. He adorns a garland of skulls and is surrounded by ghosts, evil spirits and demons. He is death and time (*Mahākāla*), that destroy all things. He is also a great ascetic (*yogī*) whose abode is at mount Kailāsa in the Himālayas where he sits on tiger skin, deep in meditation, and through his meditation the world is maintained. His body is smeared with ash, a common practice with ascetics. His neck is blue, scarred by a deadly poison, which was the last of the objects churned from cosmic ocean, which he willingly drank to save the other gods from destruction. Snakes, of which he is the lord, encircle his neck and arms. His long braided hair (*jaṭā*) is depicted in a top knot wherein crescent moon is fixed and from which flows the sacred river Gaṅgā. In the centre of his forehead is located the third eye, symbolising his superior wisdom and insight. On the one hand, he is the god of mystical stillness and on the other the lord of the dance (*naṭarāja*). He has invented as many as one hundred and eight dance forms including calm and fierce ones. *Tāṇḍava* is his most terrible dance, which, if performed by the angry god, is supposed to mark the destruction of the world at the end of the cosmic cycle. Śiva was and is still largely worshipped in his phallic (*liṅga*) form. Bhandarkar holds the view that the cult of the *liṅga* was borrowed from aboriginal tribes,[49] the *śiśnedevas* of the *Ṛg Veda*.[50] It may be remarked that examples of phalli like objects have been noted in the Harappan remains. He

was given a benign character in the *Yajurveda*. It is said in the latter *Veda* that when his worthful nature is thoroughly propitiated he becomes Śambhu or benign Śaṅkara or beneficient and Śiva or auspicious. In the *Atharvaveda,* Rudra is likened to the supreme god and in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* he assumes the characteristic of impersonal Brahma.[51] Śiva the god, the creator and destroyer, is said to be *bhava* (faith, love and the pure heart). Those who realise by internal consciousness his presence in the heart become immortal. It is pertinent to note that the term '*bhakti*' occurs for the first time in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*.[52] Sage Śvetāśvatara is said to take shelter under Rudra with deep devotion. Just as the *Gītā* voices the intense theism of Vaiṣṇavism, so does the *Śvetāśvatara* expound the supremacy of Śiva as the result of the theistic strain of thought developed towards the end of the Vedic age.

The *Mahābhārata* reflects profusely on the popularity of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism and their widespread allegiance in the masses in comparison with other cults. It contains several passages attesting to the spread of Śaivism and its increasing attraction in the society. The places mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as centres of Śaivism give us an idea of its expansion in different parts of India. It is interesting to find instances in the epic where sectarian barriers are broken and the divinity is equally seen in Viṣṇu and Mahādeva. In the *Anuśāsana-parvan*, such names of Mahādeva as Śarva, Śiva, Sthāṇu, Īśāna and Rudra, are included among the one thousand names of Viṣṇu. On the other hand, Kṛṣṇa is said to be a great devotee of Śiva. Similarly, at one place Śiva speaks of Viṣṇu as the greatest god and at another place Kṛṣṇa eulogises Mahādeva as the one who is unparalleled. Thus, in the midst of growing sectarianism, the epic enlightens us with flashes of universalism and syncretism. The epic mentions the Pāśupata along with the systems of Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra and Veda, and it is stated that

the consort of Umā, viz., Paśupati, Śrīkaṇṭha, or Śiva, son of Brahmā, revealed the *jñāna* known as Pāśupata.[53] It is believed by the Śaivas of different denominations that Śiva himself was the first preceptor of their doctrine. The *Mahābhārata* also, speaks of *liṅga* worship as part of the worship of Śiva. Rudra-Śiva is generally presumed to have been a fertility god initially. His association with bull or *nandin* strengthens this hypothesis because the bull symbolises fertility and virility in the Vedic mythology. Thus, the personality of Rudra-Śiva appears to be of composite nature. While, on the one hand, he is a hunter god, on the other, he is a fertility god connected with agriculture. His marriage with Umā or Durgā is mentioned in the epic. It was, perhaps, this union which transformed the lonely hunter into a benign, procreating god. The goddess herself seems to combine several different aspects in her personage. She is a virgin goddess residing in the mountains and riding the wild tiger, and at the same time she is benign mother goddess. In all probability, there was a simultaneous evolution in the conception of both Śiva and Śakti as society changed from a hunting to a cultivating stage. The *Rāmāyaṇa* also refers to several well-known names of Śiva, such as Śrīkaṇṭha, Rudra, Trayaṁbaka, Paśupati and Śaṅkara. The epic relates the story of Himavanta giving his daughter Umā in marriage to the 'unequalled Rudra.'

Some early *Pāli* works provide us interesting information which tends to corroborate the account provided by the Vedic texts. The Buddhist text *Niddesa* cites the various religious systems prevailing in the centuries before the Christian era. It refers to the worshippers of *deva* along with those of Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Sūrya, Indra, Agni, Brahmā and others. The worshippers of Rudra-Śiva are not named specifically in this text, yet it is highly probable that they are meant by those who paid their exclusive homage to the *deva*. It may be observed that Rudra-Śiva is mentioned as a *deva* or

devaputta in the *Cullavagga* and the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, although there is no reference to his devotees. The *Dīgha Nikāya* includes Īśāna as one of the deities apart from Indra, Soma, Varuṇa, Prajāpati, Brahmā, Mahiṛddhi, Yama and so on, worshipped by Brāhmaṇas.[54] According to the Jaina sources, the worship of Śiva was in vogue during the life-time of Mahāvīra.[55] The image of Śiva was worshipped with leaves, flowers, etc. A legend preserved in *Saḍdarśanasamuccaya* of Haribhadra, an early Jaina author, says that Gautama and Kaṇāda, founders respectively of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems were Śaivas. Guṇaratna, in his commentary of Haribhadra's work, adds that the Naiyāyikas were called Śaivas and the Vaiśeṣikas Pāśupatas.[56] The founder of the Vaiśeṣika school is reported to have entered on his work after securing the grace of Maheśvara by his ardent *yoga*. While the affiliation of Śaivism with the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems may have been a mere transitory phase, its close links with the theoretical side of Sāṅkhya and the practical side of Yoga has hardly been doubted. A legend preserved in the *Āvaśyakacūrṇī* alludes to such terms as Mahesara, Nandīsara and phallus of Śiva. According to this legend, Śiva or Maheśvara was the son of Sujeṭṭha, daughter of king Ceṭaka by mendicant Peḍhāla. The *Ācarāṅga Sūtra* refers to popular festivals in honour of Brāhmaṇical deities like Indra, Skaṇḍa, Rudra and Mukunda.[57] In the *Mahābhārata* we get references to the festivals in honour of Paśupati, i.e. Rudra.[58] The *Ācārāṅga*, in the same passage, also refers to the festivals of *yakṣas*, snakes, tree, hill, river, sea, etc. Such assemblies were popular during the Mauryan times is attested by their reference in one of the Aśokan edicts, wherein he expresses his dislike for them.[59] The Buddhist sources also speak of the honour shown to bull, sometimes in normal course and sometimes on occasions like his death. The *Pañcauposatha Jātaka* refers to the worship of a bull when it was dead in the Paccantagāma of Magadha. The narrative says that at the

sudden death of the bull multitudes of people gathered, decorated the dead body with garlands, flowers, etc. and wept while carrying it to the burial ground. Although, the association of bull with Śiva is not referred to, and its first pictorial representation is found in the Kuṣāṇa coins, where Śiva is depicted with his mount Nandī, the possibility of its worship in this form during some preceding centuries cannot be ruled out.

In a *sūtra* of Pāṇini, there are references to several names of Rudra, such as Bhava, Śarva, Rudra and Mṛda.[60] Although the name of Śiva himself does not occur in the text, but Pāṇini's *sūtra Śivadibhyo'ṇ* seems to refer to Śiva's worshippers.[61] The earliest reference to Śiva worship that can be dated definitely is that of Megasthenes. His description of the worship in India of Dionysius as a healing god and as being associated with vegetarian rites, snake and phallic emblem remind us of the worship of Śiva. The classical writers refer to a people called Sibae or Siboi who lived in Punjab near the confluence of the Hydaspes (Jhelum) and Acesines (Chenāb). They were an ancient people, generally identified with the Śivas (Śivis) a tribe mentioned in *Ṛgveda* as having been defeated by Sudās in the *Dāśarājña*.[62] They were intimately connected with Uśīnara Janapada.[63] The Sibae or Siboi, when they fought against Alexander, are described by Curtius, Diodorus and other classical writers as dressed with the skin of wild beasts and having clubs for their weapons. They fought with their oxen and mules which were also branded with the marks of clubs. The Macedonian Greeks took them to be the descendants of Heracles, who, they believed, had invaded India in the remote past. Strabo, however, does not subscribe to the above connection. On the contrary, the Sibai (Śibis), from the manner in which they are narrated in the classical accounts, may probably be associated with Śiva. Ancient Indian literary works place the Śibis in the Punjab. The

Mahābhārata groups them with the Rājanyas, Trigartas and Yaudheyas. The *Jātakas* connect them with Sauvīra.[65] The *Aṣṭādhyāyī*[66] and the Shorkot inscription mention a town Śivapura and its inhabitants as Śivapaurasa. Vogel has identified Śivapura with Shorkot in the Jhang district of Pakistan.[68] The existence of Śibis or the Śivas in the region of Punjab in the pre-Christian era is also testified by Patañjali, who refers to the *udicyagrāma* (northern village) Śivapura or Śaivapura.[69] Patañjali mentions the Śiva-bhāgavatas going about with iron trident in hand.[70] He also mentions images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha made of precious metals and used in domestic worship.[71] The Mauryas are said to have sold such idols to raise money.[72] It is likely that by the time of Patañjali, Śiva was worshipped as *Bhagavāna* and images were made of him, although we do not know what the images were like. A northern Buddhist text *Mahāmāyūrī* refers to the tutelary diety Śiva, who was the principal object of worship in the *āhāra* (province) of Śivapura. It is, thus, evident that the Sibae or the Śibis, the inhabitants of the Śivapura-Śibipura region in Punjab were mainly the devotees of Śiva.[73] Sometime in about the second century BC the Śibis together with their neighbours Mālavas (the Malloi of the classical accounts), migrated to Rajasthan. The coins of both Śibis and Mālavas have been found in Rajasthan.[74]

The reference to Śiva-bhāgavatas in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali is significant in the sense that it is the first specific mention of a sect of Śaivism. The Pāśupatas appear to have been a very ancient sect. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the Pāśupata system alongwith the Pāñcarātra and speaks of *liṅga* worship as part of the worship of Śiva. D.R. Bhandarkar pointed out long ago on the basis of textual (Purāṇic) and epigraphic evidence that the Pāśupata system was founded by Lakulīśa, the 28th or the last incarnation of Śiva.[75] There is a tradition that Śrīkaṇṭha or Lakulīśa or Nakulīśa was Śiva himself who animated the body of a dead person at

Kāyārohaṇa in Saurashtra and taught four chief disciples, viz. Kuśika, Gārgya, Mitraka and Ruṣṭa. These disciples, duly initiated into Maheśvara-yoga, would reach Rudraloka, from where there is no return. A similar legend is found in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* with the difference that the name of the incarnation is given as Lakulina and the disciples are named as Kuśika, Garga, Mitra and Kauraṣya.[76] If we take Lakulīśa or Nakulīśa to be a historical person, belonging to the 2nd century BC, as some historians are inclined to do,[77] then there is no difficulty in accepting the possibility that Śiva-bhāgavatas of the *Mahābhāṣya* were probably the same as the Pāśupatas. On the contrary, if Lakulīśa is to be assigned a date in the first half of the second century AD, then it is probable that an order not very different from the Pāśupatas in certain beliefs and practices was already in existence before the advent of Lakulīśa, the accredited founder of the Pāśupata sect. Lakulīśa may have reorganised an already existent Śaiva order, much as was done earlier by Mahāvīra the twenty-fourth Jaina *Tīrthaṅkara* or Basava, the 12th century founder of the Liṅgāyata sect, who actually organised the Vīraśaivas, a sect existing in some form long before his time. Pāśupata tenets have been summed by Mādhava in his *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* under the name Nakulīśa-Pāśupata. The Pāśupatas laid great stress on right conduct, ascetic practices and meditation culminating in quiescent state of consciousness and spontaneous living.

Mathurā seems to have been an early centre of the Pāśupatas. Kuśika, the foremost disciple of Lakulīśa established himself at Mathurā, where he and his disciples taught the Pāśupata doctrines for more than ten generations. The followers of the sect used to construct a temple in memory of each departed teacher, who used to be honoured with the divine epithet *Bhagavāna* after his death. The Jaina elephant inscription of the year 38,[78] i.e. 116 AD gives us an interesting information that the Jaina monks of Mathurā

allowed Śaiva devotees to build a typically Śaiva object of worship within the precinct of their own shrine. The history of both Buddhism and Jainism reveals that orthodox Hinduism influenced both these religious systems. It is obvious from the Jaina inscriptions of Mathurā that many donors had equal respect for orthodox Hindu deities. They wanted to perform some pious act, and for them there was really not much difference between a Jaina ascetic and a Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava *Sādhu*.

Beside the all important evidence provided by Patañjali regarding the popularity of Śaivism during the Mauryan times, we have some other sources which supplement our information. Kalhaṇa records in the *Rājataraṅginī*[79] that Aśoka built the town of Śrīnagarī beside a large number of *stūpas* and some shrines to Śiva. It is pertinent to note that Kashmir was a stronghold of Śaivism since early times and Aśoka's benefactions towards Śaivism may have been inspired by this factor rather than any real leanings to the religion on his part. Aśoka is said to have been succeeded in this region by his son Jālauka who repulsed the invasion of *mlecchas* (Greeks?) who had overrun his country. Jālauka is said to have been a great patron of Śaivism. The Jaina text *Paumacariyaṁ*, in one of its verses, says that the Jaina religion had to encounter difficult days after the rule of the Nandas. The poet further informs us that the people of India during this period had become more interested in the religion of the Buddha and Śiva.[80] The author of *Paumacariyaṁ,* writing in the first century AD, seems to give a realistic picture of the religious condition of pre-Christian India when Buddhism and Śaivism had gained ascendancy over other sects.

Archaeological remains of the Śuṅga-Śātavāhana-Kuṣāṇa periods throw a welcome light on the flourishing state of Śaivism. The Śātavāhanas followed the Brāhmaṇical religion and performed several Vedic sacrifices. They were so tolerant in spirit that Buddhism flourished as well as any other faith.

They also patronised Śaivism, which is indicated by the famous image of Śiva on the *liṅga* at Guḍimallam of the second century BC. The five feet high realistically carved phallic emblem bears upon it a two-armed figure of Śiva, who standing on shoulders of a malformed dwarf, holds a ram in his right hand and a water-vessel and a battle-axe in the left. It is a unique piece of early Śātavāhana art, probably, one of the most remarkable figures of the deity combining the Vedic concepts of Agni and Rudra in a figure that closely follows the Yakṣa model in early Indian sculpture.[81] Another evidence of the popularity of Śaivism in the Śātvahāna period is the *Gāthāsaptaśatī* written by king Hāla which opens with a passage in adoration of Śiva.

The Ekamukhaliṅga from Khoh near Nāgadā and a Śivaliṅga from Bhītā preserved in the Allahabad Museum are great masterpieces, noteworthy for their iconographic featureas. Early coins of India prove that the Śaiva sect flourished in different parts of the country. Punch Marked Coins, the earliest specimen of coinage in India, of which the more numerous series is ascribed to the Mauryas, have a variety of symbols incised on them. One of the commonest symbols is the three arched hill, one of which is placed above the two with a crescent at its top. The symbol is found on the P.M.Cs. and also on the near contemporary copper cast coins. Durga Prasad is of the view that the three arches represent the temples of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the upper cell surmounted by a crescent indicating the abode of Śiva.[82] According to T.V. Mahalingam, it may be an aniconic representation of Śiva.[83] A structure occuring on the earliest coins of the Audumbara tribe stands, according to J.N. Banerjea, for a Śaiva shrine.[84] A very common symbol on the Ujjayinī coins is the phallic emblem of Śiva represented realistically.[85] Some other symbols found on the series of local and tribal coins of India appear to have Śaivite association. Bull, the mount of Śiva, is very common on the coins of

Ayodhyā, Kauśāmbī and Mathurā. On some Eraṇ and Ujjayinī coins we notice a group of four or five tridents (*triśūla*) placed around a circle. It is interesting to note on the Ujjayinī coins the representation of Śiva in the form of bull and *liṅga* both. Numismatists are of the view that the depiction on the Ujjayinī coins ought to be interpreted as the combination of theriomorphic and phallic representation of Śiva with a *sthalavṛkṣa* sacred to him.[86] On another series of Ujjayinī coins we find anthropomorphic representation of Śiva. The god is depicted single-headed on some coins and three-headed on others. According to J.N. Banerjea, the single headed deity should be identified with Śiva, especially because the objects held in his hands, viz., *daṇḍa* and *kamaṇḍalu,* are particularly associated with Śiva. As regards the three-headed deity occurring on some of these coins, Cunningham suggested long ago that the figure should be taken as that of Śiva Mahākāla owing to the deity's association with this place.[87]

The chronology of the coins cited above has been a vexed problem of Indian numismatics. P.L. Gupta suggests their commencement in the last quarter of the third century BC[88] According to F.R. Allchin, crescent-on-hill symbol found on the uninscribed cast coins is Mauryan and hence coins bearing the symbol, at least some of them, are of the Mauryan period. He adds that the cast copper coins of Taxila are actually not local, but have every right to be regarded as copper currency of the Mauryan dynasty 'the derivatives of which were made for several centuries and include the tribal copper coinage.'[89] Another numismatist K.K. Sinha also thought that the round uninscribed copper cast coins with the devices of elephant and crescent-on-hill respectively on the obverse and the reverse circulated from Taxila to Patna in c.250 BC or a little earlier and may, therefore, belong to the age of Aśoka Maurya himself.[90] It is generally agreed that chronologically the cast coins are older than the die-

struck coins, but Rapson seems to be right when he says that the art of striking from a die would seem to have been known at Taxila at an earlier period than elsewhere in India. Similarly, it is also true that inscribed coins belong to a later period than the uninscribed coins. On palaeographic considerations John Allan thought that some of the early inscribed cast coins could be dated to the late third or early second century BC. Buhler was in favour of placing them in the third century BC and Cunningham attributed them to 'an early period of Greek rule'.[91] On the basis of the palaeographic evidence the earliest Taxila coins may be taken to have started from the period of the Mauryas about the end of the third century BC and continued for sometime after the Greeks.

The decline of the Mauryas and the collapse of the first Magadhan empire rendered the north-western frontiers of India prone to intrusion, paving the way for successive waves of invasion and establishment of foreign ruling dynasties. The expeditions of Demetrius, Eucratides and Menander, which covered with intervals a period of about four decades (c. 190–155 BC) penetrated far into the interior of the country. The north-western India remained under the Indo-Greek rule for almost a century and a half. The Greeks were followed consecutively by the Scythians (Śakas), Parthians (Pahlavas) and Kuṣāṇas. The process of increasing Indianisation of these foreigners and their espousal of different Indian religions is reflected in the above dynastic order. The statement of a Greek author Hesychius is significant, who says that the 'bull was the god of Gandhāra.' In the background of this it is interesting to note the occurrence of the figure of bull on the coins of many Indo-Greek rulers specially of the later period. The representation of bull on these coins should be taken as the depiction of Śiva in his theriomorphic form. That this theriomorphic divinity was a tutelary deity of Puṣkalāvatī, the old capital of

Gandhāra, is proved by a gold coin of the Indo-Scythian series, which shows the figure of a bull with the legend *tauros* and *usabhā* by its side inscribed in Greek and Kharoṣṭhī scripts. The long tradition of Śiva worship in this region, continuing up to the seventh century, is testified by Hiuen-Tsang who states that 'outside the west gate of the city of Puṣkalāvatī was a *deva* temple and a marvel-working image of the *deva*'. The prevalence of *deva* (Śiva) worship was not confined to the region of Gandhāra alone but had stretched beyond to some West Asian regions. Hiuen-Tsang informs us that Long-kie(ka) Lo, a country having separate governments for each of its valleys under the sovereignty of Persia, contained hundreds of Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples, many of which belonged to the Śaiva Pāśupata sect. In the capital, Su-tu-le-ssu-fa-lo, there was a huge Maheśvara image, carved beautifully and highly revered by the Pāśupatas. He adds that in Persia there were many *deva*-temples and a few monastries occupied by the monks of Sarvāstivāda school. From the fact that Sarvāstivāda was a Hīnayāna sect it may be deduced that Buddhism and Śaivism had carved out pockets of sphere in West Asia at an early date.[92] There can hardly be any doubt that the spread of Buddhism to Western Asia was due to Aśoka's missionary activities. Buddhist influence, to an extent, not only on Christianity[93] but also on some pre-Christian religious orders, such as Essenes and Theraputae[94] has been noted by scholars. The Greek familiarity with the cult of Śiva, since the time of Alexander, is rather well established.

While excavating the Sirkap mound of ancient Taxila, S.J. Marshall unearthed a bronze seal datable to the first century BC. The seal depicts the figure of Śiva, and the Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī legends – *Śivarakṣitasa* – by his side show that it was the personal seal of, may be, Śivarakṣita, a devout worshipper of his protector Śiva. In the absence of any corroborative evidence it is difficult to determine the

identity of this Śivaraksita. He might have been a foreigner adopting an Indian name which was a common practice of the time with foreigners assuming such names as 'Śivasena', 'Rudrasena', 'Rudrasingh', etc. The popularity of Śaivism among many foreign immigrants in India is indicated by other archaeological evidence. Some copper coins of Indo-Scythian king Maues, the 'king of kings' of Taxila (c. 20 BC, AD 22) show a striding male figure holding club and trident in his hands. The figure has been identified with Śiva,[95] which makes it the earliest anthropomorphic representation of an Indian god in the field of art. Similarly, some round billon coins of Indo-Parthian ruler Gondophernes (first half of the first century AD) have the trident bearing figure of Śiva depicted on them. Curiously enough, most of the coins of Gondophernes bear on the reverse a Kharoṣṭhī legend which reads – *mahārāja rajatirāja tratara devavrata Gudupharasa*.[96] It may be observed that the Indian deity Śiva who appears in his anthropomorphic form on the coins of the above mentioned foreign rulers is often described as '*deva*' in early Indian and foreign literature. It is, therefore, quite possible, that when Gondophernes describes himself as '*devavrata*', i.e. 'vowed or devoted to *deva*' he clearly refers to his Śaiva affiliation.

The founder of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty, Kujula Kadphises, who reigned shortly after the Indo-Parthian king Gondophernes, may also have been a sectary, as one of the epithets *satyadharmiṣṭha* on his coins suggests. But his successor Wima Kadphises was a devout Śaiva, a fact testified by the constant appearance of the god of his choice Śiva and his emblems, such as bull and trident-battle-axe on his coins. On some of the coins the deity has been shown without his mount and on some still rarer examples the space occupied by the deity and his mount is taken by a trident-battle-axe. The Kuṣāṇa king's Śaiva faith is further corroborated by his characteristic epithet *mahīśvara* which

forms part of the fuller coin-legend on his coins which reads – *Maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvaloga Īśvarasa mahīśvarasa Vima Kaṭhphirasa tratara*[97], i.e. '(coin) of the great king, the king of kings, lord of all the worlds, the Mahīśvara, Vima Kathaphirasa, the saviour'. It is evident that the Kuṣāṇa king had completely adapted to the Indian environment and had identified himself with Śaivism, so much so that Śiva is almost invariably depicted on the coins of all the Kuṣāṇa rulers who followed him. According to Tāranātha, Aśvaghoṣa, the celebrated Sanskrit author, generally assigned to the first century AD, was a devotee of Maheśvara before he turned to Buddhism. The *Pāli* text *Milindapañho* distinguishes Śivakas from the Brāhmaṇas and Samaṇas.[98] It was largely because of the Kuṣāṇas that Śaivism spread in Central Asia, as is shown by the evidence collected by Russian archaeologists. It appears that the foreign immigrants to India were easily attracted to Śaivism, more particularly Pāśupatism because it was based on some universal principles and disdained the caste system in order to unite the whole humanity. Kauṇḍinya, the commentator of *Pāśupata-sūtras* considers the Pāśupata practices as anti-Brāhmaṇical. The antagonism between the Brāhmaṇas and the Śaivas was so sharp that *Smṛticandrikā*[99] mandates that one must take a bath and wash his clothes if he touches a Pāśupata and he should also do *prāṇāyāma*, in addition to the above, if he happens to touch a Kāpālika. Śaivism became universally popular in the South through the exertions of the Śaiva saints called the Nāyanārs, whose devotional songs, called the *Dēvāram* appealed to the hearts of the common people, just as was the impact of *Nālāyira Divyaprabandham* of the Vaiṣṇava saints. The image of Śiva was gradually replaced in many places by *liṅga* or phallus and that gained wide currency throughout the country.

Theistic movements were not confined only to the cults of Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Śiva, but a host of other

deities were also raised in stature. Some were established on a higher pedestal by virtue of being the spouses of dominant gods, such as Śakti or Durgā as the wife of Śiva, Lakṣmī or Śrī as the wife of Viṣṇu and Sarasvatī as the wife of Brahmā, while others as off-springs of the popular gods, e.g., Gaṇapati and Kārtikeya or Skanda as the sons of Śiva. Brahmā, who formed with Viṣṇu and Śiva the famous trinity was regarded as Paśupati, the creator. Sūrya, the sun god emerged as another popular deity. In fact the five well-known theistic sects were the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śakti, Saura and Gāṇapatya. It is also true that most of the sects barring Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism were comparatively late in their evolution and systematisation, although the worship of their cult figures in a general way may have been current in India for a long time. Apart from Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, Śāktism is another theistic sect which gained tremendous strength and popularity in India. Unfortunately, we do not have any numismatic or epigraphic evidence of pre-Christian era referring to the Śāktas, which indicates their late evolution. Nevertheless, the worship of Mother-goddess must have been prevalent in India from early times as is indicated by the occurrence of ring-stones and terra-cotta female figurines at Harappan sites, probably symbolising the female principle. Only a few goddesses, like Uṣas, Vāk and Aditi figure in the early Vedic texts. It is only in the late Vedic literature that we find stray mention of goddess, such as Durgā, Kālī, Aṁbikā, Umā and others who, singly or sometimes collectively, became later the cult deity of Śāktism. The Durgā-*stotras* of the *Mahābhārata* (*Virāta* and *Bhīṣma-parvan*) testify to the importance of goddess-worship, which by that time had come to enjoy a significant place in the society. An analysis of these *stotras* reveals that the goddess-cult which was evolving comprised various elements, including some which were non-Aryan in character as was the case also with her mythical consort Śiva. These sections of the *Mahābhārata*

were composed, probably, after the beginning of the Christian era and it was, perhaps, at that time that the Śākta cult was systematised. Thus the sect, allied with Śaivism, was definitely flourishing in the early centuries of the Christian era, though its shadowy origins can be traced to quite early times. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea mentions Comārī (Kanyā-Kumārī), the virgin goddess of the extreme south of India. This is, perhaps, a pointer to the fact that the Śakti-cult had become popular even among the Tamil people by the first century AD. However, it is in the Gupta and post-Gupta inscriptions that we find clearer mention of the cult and its sectaries. The growing concept of female divinities led to the evolution of Tāṅtricism in India.

Beside the rise of new religious sects primitive beliefs in the earth and the mountains, the *yakṣas* and *gandharvas* and *nāgas*, beasts and trees continued to hold the popular imagination. A picture of the variety of religious beliefs current during the period of the present study is obtained from some early Buddhist *Pāli* texts. Reference has been made above[100] to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* which mentions such sects as Ājīvika, Nirgrantha, Muṇḍa-Śrāvaka, Jaṭilaka, Parivrājaka, Māgaṇḍika Traidaṇḍika, Aviruddhaka, Gautamaka and Devadharmika. Similarly, other *Pāli* works, e.g. *Mahāniddesa* and *Cullaniddesa* mention the Ājīvika, Nirgrantha, Jaṭila, Parivrājaka and Aviruddhaka, along with worshippers of the elephant, horse, cow, dog, crow, Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Pūrṇabhadra, Maṇibhadra, Agni, the *nāgas* and *yakṣas*, the *asuras*, the *gandharvas*, the *mahārājas*, Candra, Sūrya, Indra, Brahmā, *deva* and *dik*. The lists would, thus, demonstrate that beside the rise of major theistic sects, there was a bewildering variety of primitive beliefs and popular faiths encompassing the earth and the sky, mountains and trees, *yakṣas* and *gandharvas, nāgas* and animals.

Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* bears testimony to a religious life

which was much different from that which was ordained in the Vedic texts. The *Arthaśāstra* contains numerous references to temples, images of deities and their worship. We find the mention of terms, such as *caitydevatā*,[101] *caityadaivata*,[102] *daivatacaitya*,[103] *devatāgṛha*,[104] *devagṛha*[105] for a temple or sanctuary of a deity. Similarly, we come across such terms as *daivatapratimā*, 'the image of a deity'[106] *devatādeha* 'an idol',[107] *devatādhvaja* 'the flag of a deity'[108], *devatāpraharaṇa* 'a weapon in an idol's hand[109], *devatāpidhānaṁ bhūmigṛham*, 'an underground room with an opening covered by the image of deity'.[110] The deities were worshipped by *praṇipāta*, i.e. 'prostration' before the image[111] and *puṣpacūrṇopahāra*, 'gifts of flowers and incense'.[112] It is this mode of worshipping the Indian deities which continues in present times. There is an indication of the devotees of various deities. Particular deities to be enshrined in sanctuaries are mentioned by name in the text and the location of these sanctuaries is specified in the layout of the city. Thus, the shrines for deities, Aparājita, Apratihata, Jayanta and Vaijayanta, as also the temples of Śiva, Vaiśravaṇa, Aśvins, Śrī and Madirā are to be located in the centre of the city.[113] Further, it is added that Brahmaṇ, Indra, Yama, Senāpati (Skanda) being the presiding deities of the four main gates of the city, their temples were supposed to be built near those gates.[114] Varuṇa, and Nāgarāja are mentioned in a manner which implies their images,[115] the reference to a devotee of god Saṅkarṣaṇa seems to suggest the prevalence of worship of his image.[116] The *Arthaśāstra* also refers to *deśadevatā* or *deśadaivata*, i.e. 'tutelary deity of the region or the kingdom', *nagaradevatā*, 'tutelary deity of the city' and to *rājadevatā*, 'family deity of the king'.[118] Their temples were supposed to be located in the northern part of the city. The *Arthaśāstra*, thus, stipulates the existence of a large number of temples of various gods whose worship was popular with the people. Kauṭilya is also concerned about

the proper upkeep of the temples and security of its rich holdings in the form of cattle, images, servants, lands, buildings, cash, gold, jewels and grains.[119] The text refers to a class of officers called *devatādhyakṣa* who, probably looked after the temples and their property.[120] The temples were centres of fairs and festivals also. The *Arthaśāstra* refers to a fair in honour of the worship of a deity, as well as to festivals (*utsava*) and gatherings of people (*samāja*) on such occasions.[121] Even the king is advised to take advantage of the faith of the people in deities by arranging such fairs, so that the gifts made to the deity may be collected by the state to replenish its exchequer.[122]

Thus, in the long and diversified history of human quest for true reality as reflected in Indian religions the ultimate and the infinite has been envisaged in different ways. In theistic Hinduism it is god who manifests himself and fulfils himself in many ways, but each is the way of the eternal. The infinite creates and it is Brahmā; it preserves and is Viṣṇu; it destroys and is Rudra or Śiva. The supreme energy, the source of all phenomena, the creator and the protector formulates itself as the mother of the world, the personification of fecundity, i.e., Lakṣmī or Durgā. Beneficent even in the act of destruction she is Caṇḍī or Kālī, the dark mother, lady of sleep, or the power of time. She is conceived as the all creating, all preserving and all destroying power. The supreme reality or the one god has different powers and personalities as manifested in various names and forms. The ultimate reality is utterly indescribable, but it is sought to be described by symbols, although symbolic description cannot be a substitute for the experience of god. Though the god is formless, yet he sustains innumerable forms.

NOTES

1. *Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. I, pp. 123–24.
2. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Chapter 45; Cf. Madhusudan Ojha, *Purāṇanirmāṇādhikaraṇaṁ tathā Purāṇotpattiprasangaḥ*; F.E. Pargiter, *Purāṇa Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*; *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition.*
3. *Cullaniddesapāli,* p. 52.
4. *Rock Edict* XII.
5. *Pillar Edict* VII.
6. *Aṅguttara Nikāya,*Vol.II, p. 515.
7. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, IV.3.95-100; Cf. V.S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, pp. 358–60.
8. Cf. B.M. Barua, *The Ājīvikas*, p.61, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, III, 1927, p. 151.
9. *Bhagavadgītā*, IX, 32; XI, 53-4; XII, 1-5.
10. *Ibid*, I, 23; Cf. *Nārada Sūtra*, 16-18.
11. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 59.
12. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. 3, 6; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VIII 12; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, II.2.15; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II. 1, 4.
13. E.H. Hopkins, *The Religions of India,* p.430; Cf. S.R. Goyal, *A Religious History of Ancient India*, Vol.II, pp. 198–206.
14. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Materials for the Study of the Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Sect*, p. 39f.
15. VIII.69, 85.
16. *Vāsudevārjunābhyāṁ vun.*
17. *Mahābhāṣya*, ed. Kielhorn, II, p.314; Cf. *JRAS*, 1910, p. 168.
18. McCrindle*, The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*, pp. 208–9; Cf. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 42.n.5.
19. Cf. the conception of Kṛṣṇa Pārthasārthī in the *Bhagavadgītā.*
20. *Luder's List*, no.669; D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 90.
21. Cf. the Rgvedic conception of the Sun as a celestial bird.
22. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, IV.3.98; Corroborative evidence may be cited in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, account of Megasthenes, Buddhist work *Niddesa* and *Milindapañha.*
23. R.C. Majumdar, ed. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. II, p. 435.
24. Narayan Bapuji Utgikar*, ed. Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar,* Vol. IV. p. 42.
25. *Arthaśāstra,*13.3.54; Cf. R. Shamasastry, *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, p. 432.
26. The name Oxydrakai or the Sūdracae represents the Sanskrit Kṣūdraka, Cf. *Mahābhārata,* II.52. 15; VII. 68. 9. They were one of the most numerous and warlike of all tribes in the Punjab, occupying parts of the Jhang and Lyallpur districts.

27. P.C. Bagchi, *The Age of the Nandas and Mauryas*, p. 306.
28. *Luder's List* no.1112; D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, vol.I, p. 192.
29. Cf. *Rock Edict,* XIII; IV.
30. Cf. *Mahābhāṣya*, 5.3.99.
31. Cf. S.N. Dube, "Ancient Madhyamikā", *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress*, Jodhpur Session, 1967, pp. 29–30; D.R. Bhandarkar "Hāthībārā Brāhmī Inscription at Nagarī" *E.I.* Vol.XXII, pp. 204ff; J.C. Ghosh, "Notes on the Ghosuṇḍī Stone Inscription," *IHQ*, Vol.IX, pp. 796ff; S.K. Trigunayat, *Prachin Rajasthan men Vaiṣṇava Dharma*, pp. 81ff.
32. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions,* Vol.I, pp. 91–92.
33. K.G. Goswami, "Vaiṣṇavism", *IHQ*, Vol.XXX, p. 360.
34. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka*, p. 181.
35. J.C. Joshi, "Aṁvaleswara Staṁbhalekha", *Varada*, XIII, pt. IV. (1970, p. 45; *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress*, 1970, p. 122; K.C. Jain, *Ancient Cities and Town of Rajasthan*, Appendix 66, p. 617; R.V. Somani, "Aṁvaleshwara Kā Doosarī Shatādbī Kā Lekha," *Varadā*, XIV, pt. IV (1971) pp. 1–2.
36. K.D. Bajpai, Bharatiya Vastukala ka Itihasa, pp. 11–12.
37. *JNSI,* vol.XXXV, pp. 73–77.
38. *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*, 1913-14, p. 190f.
39. Cf. J.N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography,* pp. 104-05.
40. *IHQ*, XXX, p. 360.
41. Luders, *EI*, XXIV p. 149; D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 122.
42. Luders, *EI*, XXIV, p. 208; D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 123.
43. John Allan, *A Catalogue of the Indian Coins in the British Museum, Ancient India*, p. 202.
44. Cf. *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report,* 1903-04, p. 105; S.J. Marshal, *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*, 1911-12, p. 47.
45. G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture,* Vol.I, p. 133.
46. *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, Vol.I, pp. 52–56, pl.XII, no.17, Cf. also E.J.H. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, p. 335.
47. Narayan Bapuji Utgikar, *op.cit.*, p. 162ff.
48. Cf. *Ṛg Veda*, I. 114.8.
49. R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 115.
50. Cf.*Ṛg Veda*, 7, 21, 5.
51. 3,2-4.
52. 6.23.
53. *Śāntiparvan*, Chapters 64-67.
54. *Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol.I, p. 206.
55. *Āvaśyakaniryukti*, 509.
56. R.G. Bhandarkar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 117.
57. A.K. Chatterjee, *Ancient Indian Literary and Cultural Tradition*, p. 167.

58. I. 63.18-19.
59. *Rock Edict* I.
60. IV. 1.49.
61. IV. 1. 112.
62. *Vedic Index,* II, pp. 381–82.
63. *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra* (III, 53, 22) quoted BC Law, *Tribes in Ancient India*, p. 82.
64. RC. Majumdar, *Classical Accounts of India,* p. 136.
65. *Jātaka,* No. 425.
66. IV.2.109.
67. *E.I.* 1921, p. 16.
68. V. Smith, *Early History of India,* p. 97, n.2.
69. Cf. *Mahābhāṣya*, IV.2.52 and 104.
70. R.G. Bhandarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 116.
71. Weber, *Indische Studien*, XIII, p. 344.
72. *Mahābhāṣya*, II. p. 429.
73. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, ed. *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol.II, p. 395.
74. S.N. Dube, 'Ancient Madhyamikā, *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress*, Jodhpur Session, 1967, p. 29ff.
75. Cf. *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXII, p. 151; *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*, 1906-07, p. 179.; *EI*, XXI, p. 7.
76. *Liṅga Purāṇa*, ch.24,VV, 127-131.
77. G.C. Pande, *Foundations of Indian Culture,* Vol.I, p. 155.
78. *Indian Antiquary*, XXXIII, no.10, p.44ff; *Luders List*, No. 41.
79. I.108ff; Thomas Watters *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, i, 158-70; Samuel Beal, *Life of Hiuen Tsang*, Ch.II.
80. 89.43ff.
81. Cf. K.R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India*, p. 16.
82. Durga Prasad, *Numismatic Supplement*, XLVII, 1934, p. 61.
83. T.V. Mahalingam, 'The Bearing of the Local Coins on the Religious Condition of Central India', *Seminar Papers on the Local Coins of Northern India*, c.300 BC to 300 AD ed. A.K. Narain (hence abbreviated as *SPLC)*, p. 56.
84. J.N. Banerjea, *op.cit.,* p. 118, Cf. *JNSI*, IV, pp. 55-7, XXII, p. 44, XXVI, p. 158, XXXIV, ii, p. 196ff.
85. *Ibid*, p. 114f.
86. A.M. Shastri, *'Religious Study of Symbols on the Local Coins of Central India', SPLC*, p. 73.
87. A. Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp. 67ff; A.S. Altekar & D.B. Diskalkar, 'Kasarwad Hoard of Ujjain Coins', *JNSI*, VIII, p.II, p. 104.
88. P.L. Gupta, 'Bearing of the Local Coins on the History of Northern India' *SPLC,* pp. 147ff.
89. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London, XXII Pt.III, pp. 548ff.

90. 'The Chronology of Early Cast Coins', *SPLC,* pp. 67–69.
91. S.R. Goyal, *Indigenous Coins of Early India,* p. 133.
92. D.P. Singhal, *op.cit.*, p. 91–92.
93. Cf. Paul Carus, *Buddhism and Its Christian Critics,* p. 91–92.
94. *ERE,* V.401; XII. 318-319.
95. Cf. R.B. Whitehead, *op.cit.*
96. J.N. Banerjea, *op.cit.*,pp.111ff.
97. R.B. Whitehead, *op.cit.*,p. 183.
98. B.N. Puri, *India under the Kuṣāṇas*, p. 139.
99. *Smriticaṅdrikā*, 2.310.
100. Cf. *Aṅguttara Nikāya,* Vol.II, p. 515.
101. *Arthaśāstra*, 1.20.2.
102. *Ibid,* 11.1.25, 13.2.25.
103. *Ibid,* 5.2.39.
104. *Ibid,* 12.5.3.
105. *Ibid,* 2.36.28.
106. *Ibid,* 4.13.41., 13.2.25, 27.
107. *Ibid,* 12.5.5.
108. *Ibid,* 12.5.5, 13.3.45.
109. *Ibid,* 12.5.5.
110. *Ibid,* 2.5.2.
111. *Ibid,* 9.7.83.
112. *Ibid,* 7.17.44., 12.5.6.
113. *Ibid,* 2.4.17.
114. *Ibid,* 2.4.19.
115. *Ibid,* 13.2.16.
116. *Ibid,* 13.3.54.
117. *Ibid,* 13.2.15, 13.5.8.
118. *Ibid,* 2.4.15.
119. *Ibid,* 4.10.16.
120. *Ibid,* 5.2.
121. *Ibid,* 12.5.1.
122. *Ibid,* 5.2.39.

X

CONCLUSION

From the point of view of political and cultural history of India the age of the Mauryas is of special significance. The Mauryas established a vast empire in India whose boundaries included not only the greater part of the country but territories beyond its frontiers in the north-west. No Indian empire stands in comparison with it. The unification of the country under one sceptre and the subsequent abolition of internal hurdles accelerated the pace of development to unprecedented level, the impress of which is discernible on several aspects of India's history for many centuries. A study of this age naturally presents a variety of problems which are as complex for a satisfactory explanation as they are significant.

Numerous questions, interesting in themselves and more interesting by reason of their general importance, unfold before us as the age progresses. A large percentage of the people, probably larger than at any other epoch of India's history, seem to have been literate. The edicts of Aśoka, written in *Prākrit* (*Māgadhī*), with local dialectical variations in some versions and found from various parts of the Mauryan empire, were supposed to be read by the common men. An outstanding literary creation of this age is the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, credited to the famous counsellor of Chandragupta. It is noteworthy that the Buddhists and the Jainas favoured the popular dialects and forsook Sanskrit which was since long the language of the elite sections of Indian society. Takṣaśilā in the north-west and Kāśī and Pāṭaliputra in the

east were reputed centres of learning and, on a smaller scale, the numerous Buddhist monasteries also undertook the task of diffusing literacy and education. Educational institutions got liberal grants from the royal exchequer. In the field of art and architecture, as in other realms of cultural development, the age of the Mauryas constitued a notable epoch. An idea of the grandeur of their capital and the royal palace can be had from the description of classical writers and Fa-hien. According to the classical account, palaces of neither Susa nor Ecbatana could vie with the Mauryan palace. Centuries after the Mauryan rule, Fa-hien remarked about the Aśokan palace that no human hand of this world could have accomplished it. The patronage of the Mauryan rulers and the general material prosperity of the period stimulated the feeble aesthetic spirit of the country and contributed to the creation of objects of art which have endured to this day. The use of stone in art became common. The art of Aśokan pillars and capitals is a mature art, in some respects, 'more mature than the Greek art of the time' in the opinion of Western art critics. The lion-capital of Sārnāth, with four animals carved on the abacus and the quadrilateral lions on the top, exemplifies the perfection of Mauryan art achieved through sustained and progressive effort. The public and private morality, during this age, was of a high order. The accounts of Megasthenes tell us that the people seldom had to go to law-courts as they did not engage in telling lies or theft. Pledges or deposits were confided on mutual trust without any requirement of seals or witnesses. The Greek sources take special notice of the high state of civilisation prevailing in Mauryan India.

The history of the Mauryas has naturally evoked a great deal of curiosity and fascination of scholars. There is hardly any other Indian dynasty on which as much work has been done as on the Mauryas. Since the charismatic identification

in 1793 of Sandrokottos or Sandrokoptos of the classical accounts with Chandragupta of the Indian literary sources, hundreds of research papers and books have been published or edited on the Mauryan period by eminent scholars. Major parts of these studies are, however, concentrated on the political history and polity of the Mauryas as also their sources, specially the *Arthaśāstra* and the edicts of Aśoka. Moreover, it has been a general tendency of the historians of early India to draw heavily from the Brāhmaṇical sources. Consequently, the Buddhist and Jaina texts have either been ignored or have not been utilised to their optimum capacity. The fact remains that these texts have much to say about the dynasty they call 'Maurya' or 'Moriya'. The Buddhist and Jaina sources are often complementary to each other in furnishing the historical data. It is also pertinent to note that the Buddhist sources show a healthy respect for chronology and usually disdain the mathematical symmetries and astronomical exaggerations found in the Vedic and Jaina texts. It may be an over-statement to describe the Buddhists as the 'fathers of history' in India, but there can be no denying the fact that the interpretation of history was considered by them to be of great importance. Records of deliberations and transactions were of practical utility while the lessons of history were of moral and social value. The Buddhists compiled and preserved historical records for these purposes.

The *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* texts respectively of the Buddhists and the Jainas, despite being religious and philosophical in character, shed some valuable light on the development of socio-cultural life of the early historical times. The *Sutta Piṭaka* relates mainly to *dhamma,* i.e., the inner life of Buddha's followers, their conscience, their mental training and outlook, and later stood for the body of teachings they were to believe and follow. The *Dīgha Nikāya*, which forms part of the *Sutta Piṭaka* makes a mention of the

family of Kṣatriyas called 'Moriya'. The '*dhamma-cakkavattī* ideal followed by Aśoka seems to be foreshadowed in *Cakkavattīsiṁhanādasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The *Vinaya* was the discipline governing and regulating the outward life of the monks and nuns who had entered the monastic order. The Jainas also are well-known to have had such a code for their followers. In the process of formulating the code of conduct for monks and nuns, the Buddha has drawn heavily from the norms of social behaviour current in the society. He modified those rules and regulations, time to time, which did not conform to traditional social norms or which were likely to bring ridicule to the order. The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, thus, provides an exhaustive account of the detailed rules, meticulously formulated for the monks and nuns, for their initiation, food and raiment, for the convention of assemblies, for the recital of *prātimokṣa* and for punishment for the transgression of the rules. It purports to be essentially a record in chronological order of the events following the enlightenment of Buddha. The Sri Lankan Buddhist texts inform us that Mahinda or Mahendra who took Buddhism to that country had learnt the five *Nikāyas*, the seven books of the *Abhidhamma* and the whole of the *Vinaya* from Moggaliputta Tissa, who had convoked the third Buddhist council on the initiative of Aśoka. While the existence of the entire *Pāli* canon in the time of Aśoka may be questionable, we have the irrefutable evidence in his edicts to show that some Buddhist texts were in existence at that time. The Bhābrū edict names seven texts which have been successfully traced in the Buddhist canon. Similarly, *Kathāvatthu* a text of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, which throws valuable light on the state of Buddhism in the time of Aśoka can be attributed to this period with certitude. The *Jātaka* is the tenth book of *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. It contains the birth stories of the Buddha in previous existences when he was a Bodhisattva. The *Jātaka*, comprising 547 such

stories, is believed to have been composed in northern India (*Madhyadeśa*). The *Jātakas,* as a vast store of the Buddhist narrative poems with a preponderately moralising tendency, developed from the popular ballads that needed prose narratives to clear up their connections. Some of the stories are found also in the *Pañcatantra, Kathāsaritsāgara, Mahāvastu,* etc. They are unparallelld in the folk literature of the world in respect of their humour, wit, information and scope. The enumeration of several *Jātaka* stories in the art of Bharhut and Sāñchī shows that they had been compiled by the first century BC. However, many aspects of the socio-cultural life depicted in the *Jātakas* have definite reflections of the Mauryan and pre-Mauryan times. The Jaina tradition does not lag behind in recording legends of the constitution of the *Ardhamāgadhī* canon at Pāṭaliputra in the time of Chandragupta and the inclination of the Nanda and Maurya kings and ministers towards Jainism. The famous Jaina monk Bhadrabāhu, who is said to have migrated to the south with the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta, is credited with the compilation of ten *Niryuktis* and the *Kalpasūtra.* The Jaina *Aṅgas* contain considerable portions which seem to belong to the Mauryan times.

If literature is considered to be the integral part of culture, then it must be underlined that the Jaina literature is extremely rich and extensive. The Jaina Āgamic texts have great literary value and the works like *Ācarāṅga Sūtra, Bhagavatī, Jñātādharmakathā, Vipākasūtra, Uttarādhyayana-sūtra, Kalpasūtra* and *Daśavaikālika* are important original works. The last one, i.e. *Daśavaikālika,* composed by Brāhmin Śayyaṁbhava at Champā, around 400 BC can be compared with the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Dhammapada.* Some of these Jaina texts give interesting information regarding social and religious conditions of pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India. The story literature of the Jainas can be compared with the literature of the Hindus. The two epics and the missing

Bṛhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya have deeply influenced the Jaina narrative literature and hundreds of Śvetāmbara and Digambara works were composed in imitation of the above Brāhmaṇical works.

The Mauryan age was preceded by some momentous events and developments, the chief amongst which was the emergence of non-Brāhmaṇical or so-called heterodox Śramaṇic schools of thought. Apart from Buddha and Mahāvīra, the beacons of the socio-religious movement, there were numerous other thinkers whose views show a departure from the past, a transition from the winding highway of the Vedic tradition into the new byways of hetrodoxy essaying great intellectual adventure during the sixth-fifth centuries BC. These thinkers are, sometimes, compared with the Greek Sophists. In point of intellectual vigour and variety the comparison is apt. There is little information on various heterodox sects, but some can be found in such works as the *Sūyagadaṅga,* the second book of the Śvetāmbara Jaina canon and Buddhist *suttas* like *Brahmajāla* and *Sāmaññaphala* of the *Dīgha Nikāya.* The Jaina *suttas* mention as many as 363 such sects, while according to the Buddhist *suttas,* the number is 62 or 63. The Jainas group the 363 schools broadly into four categories, viz., Kriyāvāda, Akriyāvāda, Ajñānavāda and Vinayavāda. Early Buddhist texts frequently refer to six heretical teachers who were all contemporaries of Buddha and enjoyed considerable respect in the society. They were Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gośāla, Ajita Keśakambalī, Pakhudha Kaccayāna, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta and Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, i.e. Mahāvīra himself.

The ethos of Śramaṇic thought, as well as the figuration of its development through time do not seem to be compatible with the Vedic tradition. One has to look, therefore, to some non-Vedic and may be non-Āryan source for its origin. The ideal of asceticism, as enshrined in Śramaṇism, should be taken to have come to the Jainas,

Buddhists and other schools not from the Brāhmaṇas but from previously existing sects like *munis, yatis,* etc. That Śramaṇas formed a class distinct from the Brāhmaṇas is evident from the fact that by the time of the Buddha, they had come to have a great anitiquity. The Brāhmaṇical tradition emphasised moral and ritual obligations, happiness in this world as in the other, and hoped to gain it from the gods. The Śramaṇas, on the other hand, held towards the world an attitude of ascetic pessimism, disbelieved in a personal cause or creator of the universe, accepted plurality of souls and ultimate distinction between soul and matter, regarded the world of common sense as real and as due to one or more real factors, at least partly independent of soul, and consequently regarded as indispensable for salvation some form of strenuous practical discipline aimed at effecting a real alteration in the situation of things.

The pre-Mauryan period was also characterised by intense social, economic and political changes. Big cities had developed where a class of well-to-do merchants lived in comparative opulence, while the free peasants, the majority of the populace, had come to enjoy a higher standard of living than the people today when the pressure of population and exhaustion of the soil etc., have gravely improvised them. The *Pāli* and *Ardhamāgadhī* texts testify to the emergence of a very influential trading community organised in guilds. A completely new pattern of political structure was beginning to take shape in this period. The Buddhist and Jaina sources know of two types of states, monarchical and republican. Quite like the 'period of contending states in China', a trial of strength was taking place between the monarchies and what is more, between the monarchical and the non-monarchical forms of government. The thought-ferment, which preceded the age of the Mauryas may well be the reflection of a desire for security in the midst of flux and change. In an atmosphere when the political horizon

of northern India was overcast with fierce struggle between mighty states, such as Kośala, Vatsa, Avanti, Magadha, Vajji, etc. vying for supremacy and when material life was advancing at a fast pace one would expect pragmatic world-view to develop. What happens, instead, is that thoughtful men hankered after overcoming the change by something permanent and immutable. The intense search for the absolute which possessed the more enlightened minds may have, thus, sprung from a profound sense of insecurity and instablity. While the Jainas protested against the rampant violence and bloodshed, the Buddhists formulated an ideal of 'Universal Moral Ruler,' which the most famous emperor of ancient India attempted to put into practice. Buddhism and Jainism advocated the conservation of peace and the abolition of war. They subscribed to a pacifistic approach in polity as well, as they did in the case of society and economy. Although, political imperialism based on coercion is an open repudiation of the Buddhist and Jaina emphasis on non-violence, compassion and pacifism and their own organisations were based on democratic principles, both movements furthered, in a way, the cause of political expansion. The *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* inculcates the similarity between the ideal of Buddhahood and the ideal of *cakkavattī* (*cakravartin*) or sole sovereign. According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the fully enlightened Tathāgata (Buddha) and the *cakkavattī* are two persons who are born for the happiness of many folk, and who are both extraordinary. The universalism and humanism of the ascetic movements seem to have also contributed to the promotion of a sense of 'national' feeling among the people. Their impact went far beyond the spheres of religious and philosophical thought and paved the way for the disruption of the Vedic social order by looseṇing the stranglehold of caste system and the dominance of the Brāhmaṇas. As a result, the unnecessary rites and rituals, as well as superstitions

gave way to social harmony and political understanding.

Political unity of India, in a true sense, was established for the first time under the Mauryan rule. The ideal of the *cakravartī* was brought down to earth from the clound-land of religious myth, and the *cakravartīkṣetraṁ,* the sphere of the sole sovereign is clearly defined in the *Arthaśāstra*, extending from Himālayas to the Indian Ocean and a thousand *yojanas* across. The age of the Mauryas marks the definite triumph of the monarchical state against rival forms of political organisation, particularly that of the tribal republic, which henceforth became much rarer and disappeared completely in the following centuries. The vestiges of the Macedonian occupation in the north-west of India were wiped out by the war of liberation waged by Chandragupta, perhaps, even before the sudden death of Alexander in 323 BC. By defeating the clans and kingdoms of north-western India and the Punjab, Alexander had created vast political vacuum which, after the withdrawal of the Greeks, Chandragupta was quick to fill. The demolition of the well-entrenched Nanda rule and the occupation of Pāṭaliputra by Chandragupta was a virtual revolution, which rid the Magadhan throne of a dynasty that, despite its commendable achievements in certain respects, could not endear itself to the people. Having established himself firmly on the throne of Magadha, Chandragupta seems to have started his career of conquest. Unfortunately, we do not get definite details of his campaigns. The Greek writers, Plutarch and Justin, represent him as having overrun and obtained possession of the entire country. It is no doubt an exaggeration, if taken as such, but there is no reason to disbelieve that beside Magadha and Punjab his sway extended to distant regions of India. We learn from the account of Appianus about the confrontation between Chandragupta and Seleucus, a former general of Alexander who, as per the treaty of Triparadisus, had got Asia including

India as his share of erstwhile Macedonian empire. The war itself, between Chandragupta and Seleucus, received very little notice of the classical historians, whereas the final 'understanding' attracted much greater attention. Since Seleucus had to cede to Chandragupta some of the Macedonian possessions on the Indus, 'receiving in exchange the comparatively small recompense of five hundred elephants', it may be inferred that the Syrian king got the worse of it and was, probably, compelled to sue for peace. Drawing upon the account of Pliny, scholars are of the view that the area ceded by Seleucus comprised the satrapies of Gedrosia, Arachosia, Paropanisadae and Aria, corresponding to Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Makran. 'The Hindukush now became the frontier between Chandragupta's provinces of Paropanisadae to the south and the Seleucuid province of Bactria to the north... More than 2000 years ago the first emperor of India entered into possession of that scientific frontier sighed for in vain by his British successors and never held in its entirety even by the Mughal emperors of the 16th and 17th centuries AD'

The achievements of Chandragupta are remarkable in so far as he had not inherited a throne and had risen from humble circumstances. It may be added that he was not only an accomplished soldier and a great conqueror but an equally astute administrator, which is clearly testified by the Syrian ambassador Megasthenes, who spent some years in the court of Pāṭaliputra. Mauryan system of administration, which has inspired the subsequent administrative systems of India, may owe something to the predecessors, but the fact remains that much of it was due to his own ability and the genius of his celebrated counsellor Chāṇakya. Together they organised one of the most powerful and efficient bureaucracies known to the history of the world. The significant political development typified by the Mauryan rule appears to have generated much discussion and political

science might have taken birth in this period to mature finally in the *Arthaśāstra*, which holds a place in the literature of Indian polity corresponding to that of the Mauryan empire in Indian history.

The conquests and military exploits of Chandragupta mark the fruition of the ideal of a united India under an *ekarāta* or *cakravartin* and bring to completion the Kauṭilyan concept of *cakravartīkṣetraṁ* but the real import of the Buddhist ideal as the supreme ruler of the earth, not by physical might but by moral and spiritual power was sought to be realised by Aśoka. He seems to have been influenced by the political philosophy of the *Tripiṭaka* and wanted to be a *cakravartin* in the true sense of the term. This alone can explain why his charities were not confined merely to the human beings but were extended to the beasts, nay even to the birds, in fact, to the whole creature world; and those again, not merely for their material comfort, but also spritual elevation. These last kingdoms were conquered by him, not by war or brute force, but by *dhamma* or soul force. In other words, Aśoka aspired to become a *cakravartin dhārmika dharmarājā.* That he did not, perhaps, overrate himself may be seen from the fact that the *Divyāvadāna* actually describes him as *caturbhāga-cakravartī dhārmika dharmarājā.*

The Buddhist and Jaina movements espoused the model of an impersonal society characterised by such ideals as wisdom, reason, moderation, harmony, righteousness, charity and compassion. The society in their view was universal as distinguished from a tribal society; it was the community of the righteous anywhere and everywhere, unencumbered by rules of tribal, regional or caste affiliations. The *dhamma* had, thus, become both a spiritual and social force. It became an instrument dedicated to the creation of certain values like *samatā*, which the Mauryan emperor Aśoka seeks to translate into action in his principles of *daṇḍasamatā* and *vyavahārasamatā*. He is, however, candid enough to warn

the *āṭavikas* or tribesmen of the forest principalities, who were a constant source of danger to the people and who had been kept under control by force by the earlier kings, that not-withstanding his intention to conciliate and educate them, he is possessed of all the physical power to suppress them, if their menace is not restrained by peaceful means.

The Mauryan dynasty appears to have been receptive to ascetic teachers. Aśoka's predecessors Bindusara and Chandragupta, are reported to have been patrons of the sects of the Ājīvikas and the Jainas, respectively. There is sufficient positive evidence to show that Aśoka embraced Buddhism, probably, in the ninth year of his reign in the aftermath of the Kaliṅga war. The Bhābrū edict pointedly mentions his reverence for the Buddhist trinity–Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha.* An important outcome of his change of heart and conversion to Buddhism was the issuance of a large number of edicts, which were intended to inform the people about his policy as a ruler, his faith and principles of *dhamma* and the purpose behind its propagation. An analysis of the different facets of *dhamma* as enunciated in his edicts leads to the view that it is remarkably in keeping with the basic notes of Buddha's teachings. The characterising feature of *dhamma* is its popular non-scholastic and non-doctrinal conception. Aśoka, in consonance with Buddha's tone, has eschewed all matters of theology and speculative philosophy and has nowhere intended to thrust his own conviction on others. He is concerned with the same practical aspects of life which had once struck the Buddha, i.e. what is proper for man to do which leads to much good and ultimately brings about unbounded joy and happiness and elevation of human nature. He sought by benevolence to win the hearts of men to his faith.

Beside reiterating Buddha's instruction for active co-operation (*samavāya*) among all sects for their growth in essential matters, he undertook practical measures for the

repression of schism in the Buddhist order. In the post canonical *Pāli* commentatorial literature and the Sri Lankan chronicles, there is evidence to show that within two centuries of Buddha's decease, the *saṅgha* was split into eighteen sects. There is direct epigraphic evidence datable to early centuries of the Christian era, bearing on the subject, and more indirect ones going back to second century B.C. Buddhist thought and organisation, in the age of Aśoka, were passing through their most turbulent phase when repeated schisms had rent the original unity and produced an atmosphere seething with doctrinal debates and controversies. Buddhism, during this period, was characterised by a reassessment of the meaning, significance, implications and presuppositions of the traditional Buddhist ideas. Diverse hypotheses were advanced to elucidate and harmonise them internally within the context of Buddhist system as also with the ideas which were then current in the general intellectual milieu of the times. The Sri Lankan chronicles, as also the *Pāli Aṭṭhakathās* inform us that about 200 years after the demise of the Buddha a large number of pseudo-Buddhists entered the *saṅgha*. They held unorthodox views in matters of both the doctrine, as well as the discipline. The result was that the most important *uposatha* ceremony of the Buddhist order was held in abeyance for about seven years, as the orthodox monks refused to perform it in the company of those whom they considered as heretics. Ultimately the order was purged jointly by Aśoka and Moggaliputta Tissa of all those monks who subscribed to unorthodox views. After the removal of the non-conformists a council was held at Pāṭaliputra under the presidentship of Moggaliputta Tissa. The most significant outcome of the council was the compilation of *Kathāvatthu* with a view to refuting the doctrines of the non-Theravāda or so-called heretical sects. *Kathāvatthu*, the only text in the *Pāli* canon of which the date and authorship is recorded, is

a leading document presenting before us a broad cross-section of Buddhist thought in an age of critical transition when some of the conflicts and obscurities, latent in the earlier doctrines, emerged openly and when in the course of their discussion ground was prepared for future development. It is, in fact, a polemical text consisting of the refutation in strict logical form of more than two hundred propositions maintained by different early Buddhist sects other than the Theravāda. The arguments advanced in the course of the debates are largely based on the *suttas* of the *Pāli* canon. An important issue debated in the *Kathāvatthu* centres round the nature of Buddhahood. It seems that the basic difference between the conceptions of an Arhat and the Buddha was brought to the fore and it led to two parallel developments in the history of Buddhism. One led to gradual decline in the ideal of Arhatship and the other twoards eventual deification of the Buddha. His transcendence was bound to be projected back over his previous existence as a Bodhisattva. Similarly, certain assertions were made emphasising an ideal and abstract nature of *saṅgha* as against the hard fact of its visible reality. Attempt was also made to meet the exigencies of the early Buddhist doctrines of *anatta* (no-soul) and *anicca* (impermanance). Just as the dogmatic assertion of the non-existence of self had to be supplemented by some 'pseudo-selves', so the dogmatic assertion of impermanence could be made credible only by introducing certain 'pseudo-permanencies.' Before the emergence of the controversies, recorded in the text, Buddhism still presented, more or less, an ecumenical aspect, but not long afterwards beginnings of the Mahāyāna are clearly traceable.

Together with Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism is one of the three major religious schools which developed in early India. It is a living and popular faith which has produced worthy monks and laymen of whom any society could be proud of. The Jaina contributions to Indian art and

architecture, to the preservation and enrichment of Indian literature, and to the cultivation of languages, both Aryan and Dravidian are significant. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism has never spread beyond the borders of India. Yet it did gradually extend over the various regions of India. *Therāvalī*, which is a part of the Jaina canonical text *Kalpasūtra*, gives us an idea of the gradual spread of Jainism in different parts of India. Among the four *śākhās* originating from Godāsa, a disciple of Bhadrabāhu, the famous monk of the time of Chandragupta, we have the mention of three significant names, i.e. Tāmraliptikā *śākhā*, Koṭivarṣiyā *śākhā* and Puṇḍravardhanīyā *śākhā*. All these *śākhās* were evidently connected with three well-known geographical regions, which were all located in Bengal. It shows that Jainism started flourishing in Bengal quite early. It seems to have found its way into the present Karnataka and Tamilnadu also at an early date. The Digambara Jaina traditions, both literary and epigraphic, claim that Chandragupta embraced their religion during the closing years of his life. Faced with a severe famine, lasting twelve years, half of the Jaina community under the leadership of Bhadrabāhu moved off towards the south and settled in Karnataka. They were able to establish their faith in all those regions. Chandragupta, who is said to have accompanied the emigrants committed religious suicide by self-starvation at Śravaṇa Belgolā. The migration and the death of Chandragupta may have taken place somewhere around 298-296 BC which is the date of Bindusāra's accession. The period is significant in Jaina history for not only its establishment in the south but also for the fixing of the earliest Jaina canon. The notional division of the Jaina order into the Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects may be dated from this period, although it may have been formalised later in the first century AD. There are some interesting Jaina traditions which reckon Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya also among the followers of the Jaina faith. He is

said to have been born of Caṇeśvarī, the wife of Brāhmin Caṇi, who was a devout Jaina. It is added that Chandragupta chose Jaina teachers at the instance of Chāṇakya. While there is no corroborative evidence to sustain the story that Chāṇakya was a Jaina Brāhmin, the tradition regarding Chandragupta's conversion to Jainism and migration to the south towards the end of his rule may have some historical basis. During the reign of Aśoka the religion is said to have been introduced in Kashmir. Another Mauryan ruler Samprati enjoys the same respect in the Jaina tradition as does Aśoka in the Buddhist one. The third and second centuries BC seem to have been important centuries in the history of Jainism. Apart from its spread in Bengal and Karnataka and introduction in Kashmir, we have inscriptions to show that it was already very powerful in Orissa in the second century BC and in Mathurā in the north-west in the first century BC.

Ājīvika was another ascetic sect which was considerably popular in the time of the Mauryas. The Jaina and the Buddhist texts are in agreement in calling the Ājīvikas naked ascetics (*acelakas*), and in denouncing them on various counts, including their fatalistic creed. The Ājīvikas refused to fall in line with the prevalent doctrine of *karman.* For Gośāla, the founder of the sect, belief in the idea of free will is a vulgar error. He believed that the strong, the forceful, and the courageous, like the weakling, the idler, and the coward, were all completely subject to the one principle which determined all things. Like the other ascetic orders, Ājīvikas also had lay followers in the society. Their strong presence in the Mauryan period is attested by various sources. The *Arthaśāstra,* for example, prohibits the entertainment of Śākyas, Ājīvikas and other heretical monks. It is significant to note that together with the Śākyas (Buddhists), Ājīvikas alone are mentioned by name, which shows their prominence. Even Aśoka, a staunch follower of Buddhism had a special consideration for the Ājīvikas as is shown by his

edicts which mention their order on three different occasions. Aśoka had dedicated two of the four caves in the Barābara hills to the Ājīvikas. The *Divyāvadāna* tells us that an Ājīvika ascetic had predicted about the future greatness of Aśoka before his birth.

Towards the end of the Vedic age the hold of the older Vedic gods disappears completely, giving way to the appearance of new ones or reemergence of some old ones, like Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Rudra as sectarian deities. Among the new gods Vāsudeva is mentioned in Pāṇini and although, the Kṛṣṇa cult assumes importance only later, Balarāma, his brother, was already the object of worship. Skanda or Senāpati was also worshipped in Mauryan times. The *Arthaśāstra* makes a mention of the devotee of god Saṅkarṣaṇa also and the temple of Śiva whose ascendency seems to have been established by this time. There is an interesting passage occurring in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, which says that the Mauryas got manufactured the images of god (*arcā*) to be sold in the market to raise the state revenue. Devotional theism tended to develop in sects like the Pāśupata (Śaiva) and Pāñcarātra (Vaiṣṇava), which disclaimed any Vedic roots. It is true that between Vedic Viṣṇu and Rudra and their worship on the one side, and the Pāñcarātra and Pāśupata cults, on the other, there is a certain break due, probably, to the intrusion of non-Vedic influences. Theistic development did not confine itself to the cults of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Śiva, but a host of other deities acquired new prestige and popularity. Some gained in stature by virtue of being the spouses of dominant gods, while others as off-springs of the popular gods.

With the diminishing of the awe and aura of the Vedic religion and growing incomprehensibility of the abstruse philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, the more earnest and devout souls sought comfort in *bhakti* to a personal god, the most prominent being the two major gods, Viṣṇu and Śiva

although, minor divinities continued to demand the allegiance of the common man. The theistic movements whose genesis can be traced to the intellectual unrest of the sixtyh–fifth centuries BC seem to mirror the other shade of deep seated discontent against the existing socio-religious conditions. The resultant movements trended in two distinct directions. While it manifested itself in the north-east in a pronounced anti-Vedic stance, attempt was made in the north-west to reconcile the newer tendencies with orthodoxy. The Buddhist and Jaina literary works evince the former while the *Bhagavadgītā* is a classic example of the latter. The most important element that operated to bring the new sects about is *bhakti*, primarily the loving adoration of some persons by others, but secondarily the deep, mystic devotion for some personal deity who is the principal object of worship to his devotees. These exclusive worshippers of particular deities were grouped under different denominations, which eventually came to become popular as one or the other of the sects.

Thus, the religio-philosopic culture of the early historical India, apart from witnessing the upsurge of ascetic orders, was characerised by the rise of theistic sects, e.g., (a) Bhāgavatism emerging as an orthodox faith as a result of the identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with the Vedic god Viṣṇu, (b) evolution of Śaivism into a complete theistic system within the orthodox fold, (c) popularisation of reorganised theistic religion through the celebrated epics *Rāmayāṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. The latter, for example, widely reflects the popularity of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. Instances may also be cited in the epic where sectarian barriers are broken and the divinity is equally seen in Viṣṇu and Mahādeva. In the midst of widespread sectarianism there are flashes of universalism and syncretism. In the background of this tolerance it is not surprising that attempts were made to harmonise Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. In the neo or Purāṇic

Hinduism there was devised a holy trinity (*Trimurti* or Triple Form) of Brahmā the creator, Viṣṇu the preserver and Śiva the destroyer. It is stipulated that the supreme reality or the one god has different powers and personalities as manifested in various names and forms.

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